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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL., 37, NO. 1 JANUARY 1995

Martyrdom in the Early Church (Part 1)

Carolina Christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
EDITORIAL & PUBLICATION STAFF
Johnny R. Melton, Editor
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
Jim Mullican, Associate Editor
Michael Mobley, News Editor
Tim Sensing, Book Review Editor

CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Road, Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: individual—$8/year ($15/2 years and $22/3 years); club of five or more—$7.50 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles—50¢/copy/month, or church mailing list (minimum 15) 60¢/copy/month.

Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes with Form 3579 to:
Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Address editorial matter to:
Johnny R. Melton
RR 2 Box 137
Conover, NC 28613-9609

Address news items to:
Michael Mobley
PO Box 312
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All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 20th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 20.

Order from Carolina Christian Bookstore, PO Box 1219, Yadkinville, NC 27055 (1-800-343-1081, Monday—Friday, 9:00—6:00).

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

JANUARY IS THE MONTH FOR making New Year's Resolutions. Such undertakings are often ridiculed and joked about because they so often meet with frustration and failure.

One resolution that is high on a lot of lists, but that is rarely accomplished, is to read the entire Bible during the course of the year. I especially want to commend this resolution to you and to suggest what I consider to be the most effective way to accomplish it.

F. Lagard Smith has edited *The Narrated Bible,* which is an arrangement of the biblical text into chronological order. But it is more than that. The Law of Moses is arranged in outline form, making it much easier to get through Leviticus! The Psalms and the Proverbs are arranged thematically (this feature alone makes it a worthwhile investment for anyone who teaches or preaches and desires to illustrate points with Psalms or Proverbs). The prophetic and wisdom literature in the Old Testament is arranged within the historical narrative, and the historical books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles have been harmonized.

In the New Testament, the Gospel narratives have been harmonized and Paul's epistles are incorporated into their historical setting in Acts. In addition to this chronological and thematic arrangement of the text, brother Smith has added his own running narration (hence the name, *Narrated Bible*), which amounts to a mini-commentary. The narration serves to link sections of text together, providing insight and keeping the reader's attention focused on the flow of the biblical story.

The last feature of the *Narrated Bible* that makes it particularly useful for daily Bible reading is that it is arranged into 365 units, (hence the basis for the paperback edition's title, *The Daily Bible*).

If you have resolved in the past to read the Bible through in a year only to get bogged down in February in the book of Leviticus, take heart! Renew the resolution and secure a copy of the *Narrated Bible*, and give attention to the Word of God every day. (Contact Carolina Christian Bookstore for either the *Narrated Bible* [cloth edition], or the *Daily Bible* [softcover edition].)

More on Bible Reading

A number of years ago, Gordon and Patricia Sabine interviewed 1,382 people asking them all the same two questions: "What book made the greatest difference in your life?" and "What difference did it make?" According to their book, *Books that Made the Difference*, the Bible was the answer given most frequently as the book that had made the greatest difference in one's life.

McGeorge Bundy, former Harvard dean, former special assistant for national affairs to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and former president of the Ford Foundation observed: "I don't think you can possibly grow up in an education in which the exposition of life and the meaning of the life of Jesus is central, and not say that the New Testament is the most important book in your life. It's the most powerful single volume your encounter."

Mrs. Howard Cannon named the Bible as the book that had made the greatest difference in her life. She said, "The Bible means the difference between living a life of despair and hopelessness and a life of joy and hope."

Mrs. Cannon explained that she found great comfort in the Psalms, "especially that part about making a joyful noise.

"That's what I've lived by, making joyful noises. I'm convinced that Jesus had a magnificent sense of humor—I even have one picture of him with his head thrown back, roaring with laughter at some joke."

When Mrs. Cannon started her professional career a half century ago, she wanted to be a dramatic actress. Instead, "the Lord lead me to be something else," and she created the character she's played at the Grand Ole Opry "for the one purpose of bringing joy and happiness to people.

"Now one of the bright spots of my life is that people say to me over and over, that they have laughed and they have felt a little better from having heard this character. And that's all I ask of my life, of my career, is that people find happiness in Minnie Pearl."

It is encouraging to know that the Bible is still respected and read by men and women in all walks of life. And while Bible-reading alone is not sufficient to save, it is certain that one who reads regularly is in a far better position to trust and obey the divine precepts contained on its pages.

Martyrdom, Part 1

This issue of *Carolina Christian* has been developed by Stanley N. Helton. We are indebted to brother Helton and those who have contributed articles on the theme of "Martyrdom in the Early Church." Due to the amount of material submitted this issue will be Part 1, with Part 2 coming in February. It is our hope that reading and learning about martyrdom in the early church will encourage Christians today to "Be faithful, even to the point of death," (Rev. 2:10) in anticipation of the "crown of life" the Lord has promised.

Associate Editorial

The Value of a Christian College

By Jim Mullican

THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE EDUcated in a Christian school is a priceless gift which Christian parents can give to their children, but many fail to see its importance. As one who attended two state universities as well as two Christian universities, and who now has one child in college and another who soon will be, I believe that my own experiences and observations provide some basis for the following article.

Cons

Parents and students who choose to not utilize the services of a Christian college often focus on four items as the basis for their choice.

Some want to attend a school close to home. Depending on where one lives, the nearest Christian school may be several hundred miles away, especially considering that none are located in the Carolinas; but several are located within a day's drive of my home in the mountains of western North Carolina. While homesickness can be a problem—it was for me during the first semester away from home at a state university—it must be dealt with at some time. As much as parents want to keep their children at home, they must leave at some point. Is it better to have homesickness during the first year of marriage, or during the first job?

Cost is always a major concern. At the University of Texas which I attended in the late 1960's, the tuition for a full load of courses was only fifty dollars. At Abilene Christian College, to which I transferred, the tuition was about $600 for the same course load. Both seem cheap today, but even though it required long hours to earn the extra money, I have never regretted it. Today, the difference in cost for a student to live on campus at a state university versus a Christian college may be as little as two thousand dollars per year. Scholarships and other financial aid can usually make up for this difference.

Some question whether the quality of education is as high at a Christian school as at a state university. The answer is a resounding "Yes!" Graduates of our Christian schools whom I personally know are among the nation's best attorneys. A high percentage of accounting students become CPA's after passing the test on their first attempt—an uncommon achievement. Some are teaching at prestigious schools such as Yale. Christian colleges provide a quality education.

Others object that Christian colleges do not offer the particular studies they wish to pursue. Occasionally this may be true, although what is not available at one school may be at another. Some Christian schools offer cooperative programs in conjunction with nearby state schools or private schools, so that certain courses not offered by the Christian college may be taken on another campus. Finally, many students take their first two or three years of work at a Christian school, and then transfer to a state school, sometimes receiving a degree from both schools as a result.

Pros

The reasons for choosing a Christian school are many. Most of the students will be Christians, and this increases the likelihood that a young person will remain faithful to the Lord. It's easier to attend Bible class and worship when most others are doing the same, than when one's roommate is sleeping off a hangover, and no one else is seeking to serve God. The peer group on a Christian college campus is vastly superior to that on a state campus. Not everyone at a Christian school will be a Christian or will try to live like one. Not everyone at a state school is a moral degenerate. Still, having attended both, I can testify that the difference in atmosphere is tremendous.

Also remember that among these fellow students, most will make lifelong friends, and Christian friends will be a greater source of strength and encouragement. During these years, most will select a marriage partner. The odds of forming a Christian marriage are much greater on a Christian college campus than on that of a state school.

The advantage of studying under Christian professors is significant, especially in science courses, since the idea of God's creation will almost certainly be rejected by teachers at a state school. Some deliberately attack any student's faith in God. A Christian teacher, on the other hand, seeks to strengthen faith and shows how the Bible and science agree in pointing to God as Creator.

The supervision provided at a Christian college is another advantage. While college-aged students should be old enough to make their own decisions, the guidance of older Christians is still valuable, just as it is in the local church. Besides, who can deny that there is a greater temptation to sin where members of the opposite sex are allowed to spend the night in one's dorm room, than where they are not? Parents who remember life at a state school 20 years ago may not be aware of the changed rules.

As to costs, Christian colleges today generally offer financial aid packages which can ease the strain of funding a quality education. (See Sidebar Below).

Most young people grow tremendously between the ages of 18 In 21. Their bodies may be fully grown at 18, but their emotional and intellectual development continues for a lifetime, and college years are where many major choices and decisions are made. I would encourage both students and parents to provide a supportive Christian environment for those crucial years. Choose a Christian college, and even in eternity you will not regret it. Choose a state school and you may. I don't want to risk my children's souls to save a little money.

Contact Jim Mullican at RR 4 Box 30-A, Clyde, NC 28721.

Colleges Honored in *U.S. News and World Report*

U.S. News and World Report has named four universities associated with churches of Christ in either its "America's Best Colleges" issue of September 26 or in its "America's Best Values" issue of October 3. The universities and the categories under which they are listed are:

Pepperdine University, Malibu, California, in "America's Best Colleges," under National Universities, is in the first tier of the survey (rankings of 26 to 57). Pepperdine was also listed in "America's Best Values," under National Universities as a runner-up in best discounted (after financial aid is applied) tuition price.

Abilene Christian University, Abilene, Texas, in "America's Best Values" under Regional Universities/west, ranked third in sticker price (published costs) and second in discounted tuition price (after financial aid is applied).

Harding University, Searcy, Arkansas, in "America's Best College," under Regional Universities/south, ranked 11th and in "America's Best Values" ranked third in sticker price. Harding also ranked fifth in Regional Universities/south in the category of most efficient schools, that is, institutions that ranked highest in relation to what they spent per student.

Oklahoma Christian University, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, in "America's Best Values" under Regional Liberal Arts Colleges/west ranked third on best sticker price and second on best discounted tuition price. (As reported in *Christian Chronicle*, January 1995, p. 9)

Why Study Early Church History?

By Stanley N. Helton

FOR A MOVEMENT DEDICATED to the idea of "Back to the Bible," it is perhaps useful to explain why we should venture into the area of church history.

Christians in our congregations, and many of our ministers, have little, if any, connected sense of history after the time of the apostles up to the time of Alexander Campbell, and then, what is there is sketchy, undeveloped, and lacking comprehensiveness. There are several reason this is so, but one stands out: our strong belief—a belief that goes back to before the Reformation—that after the first century, the primitive church fell from its pristine purity and that, until the Campbell-Stone movement, the church was lost, or at the very least, suppressed. Subsequently, the intervening period from the apostles to our time has been tainted and, therefore, of little interest to a back-to-the-Bible fellowship. (Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America*, 1630-1875 [Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1988], explores this theme in greater depth.)

So, in light of our general aversion to history, perhaps several reasons we should give ourselves to the study of early Christian history are in order. (See Joseph Kelley, "Why Study Early Church History" in Ian Hazlett, ed., *Early Christianity: Origins and Evolution to* A.D. *600* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1991], 3-13, for this same subject discussing the relevance of Early Church History for seminary students.)

First, history explains the present. History, which is primarily concerned with facts and the interpretation of those facts, provides us with a matrix through which to view the world and to understand our place in our time. Church history itself is the study of the history of God's people; though, to be sure, they were a mixed people. These people exhibited relative degrees of faithfulness and unfaithfulness in all areas of faith and practice.

When we make judgments against earlier Christians, we should make them only with compassion and humility. Surveys of history, by definition, can only deal with externals and cannot declare what the motive of earlier Christians might have been. The motives of people can be determined only with careful study, if even then. Church history, then, is the story of the greatest people ever as they struggle to comprehend the meaning of the greatest event ever—the advent of God. We study Early Christian History because it is full of romance and adventure. Kelly summarizes the first six centuries, "The story of the Church begins at Pentecost with a frightened group of disciples wondering what will happen to them; it progresses through an almost frenetic attempt to win over the outside world before the Second Coming; it focuses on an epic struggle with the most powerful empire of the ancient world; it reaches its high point with the conversion of that empire to the new faith; [and] it closes with the gradual decline of a great civilization and the emergence of a new world" ("Why Study Early Church History," 5). The task of church history is to trace the sources of Christianity and the traditions of Christianity into the present day so that we can understand better both the early Christians and, in that process, ourselves.

There are several values of studying early church history. Early church history can both confirm and elucidate the New Testament. (For a more complete treatment, see Everett Ferguson, "Using Historical Foreground in New Testament Interpretation" in F. Furman Kearley, et al., *Biblical Interpretation: Principles and Practices* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986],

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254-263). Several examples where Early Christian History illuminates the New Testament might be

- how Justin Martyr's detailed description of Christian assemblies corresponds well with what one knows from the New Testament;
- how the church's organization as described in the *Didache* reflects what we know from the New Testament; and
- that baptism for the forgiveness of sins is the standard second-century teaching. It was not until later that the doctrine of baptismal regeneration developed.

Early Christian History places the New Testament in the context of history. We find from our study of church history that later practices (even erroneous ones) follow from earlier, giving us the maxim, "Action precede dogma." For example, infant baptism preceded the doctrine of original sin. This show the propensity of humans to justify their current behavior rather than constantly seeking a fresh and vital relationship with God.

We also see how others solved or did not solve their problems. For example, the Christian philosophy of the second century apologists can provide a model for the practice of apologetics; the monastics can teach of conforming or withdrawing from the world; and we can struggle with the early Christians as they faced problems of wealth and social acceptance.

Early Christian History give us an opportunity to learn from the whole tradition of the Christian church and a chance to examine noble lives.

In the end, Church History brings understanding and sympathy. At this point, it would be appropriate to introduce the main sources for the study of Early Christian History.

Sources for the Study of Early Christian History

The first task of the historian is to uncover the sources (see list below). Sources are selective and incomplete so the historian is ever seeking to fill in the gaps. The historian also evaluates the source's reliability and then finally reconstructs as best he can an interpretation which best accounts for the facts.

The major sources for the study of Early Church History include:

a. Canonical New Testament and its variant readings.
b. Non-canonical Christian literature, such as the
    - Apostolic Fathers
    - New Testament Apocrypha
    - Apologists
    - Acts of the Martyrs.
c. Jewish Literature (such as the writings of Josephus and Philo)
d. Pagan Literature, including such authors, as
    - Tacitus
    - Suetonius
    - Pliny
e. Liturgical Materials, though often coming from later times, give testimony to an earlier period.
f. Epigraphy or Inscriptions (Christian epigraphy doesn't appear until the 2nd century)
g. Archaeology
h. Art (starts around A.D. 200)

From this cadre of materials the historian reconstructs and interprets what happened in a given time and place. The best single volume for beginning study in the area of early Christian history would probably be W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). We pray that this edition of the ***Carolina Christian*** will inspire you to stand as firm as the martyrs and that it will tease you into investigating the early history of Christianity.

Guest Editor. Stan serves the Gregg Avenue Church of Christ in Florence, SC.

Third Annual Men's Day

Theme:

Spiritual Renewal in the Church

Date:

January 21, 1995

Place:

Walkup Avenue Church of Christ

Monroe, North Carolina

An Introduction to Martyrdom in the Early Church

By Everett Ferguson (with Stan Helton)

MARTYRDOM MEANS THE GIVING of one's life because of one's faith. The Greek noun *martus* meant "witness" and the cognate verb, *martureo*, meant "to testify." In the New Testament there is a progression from "one who witnesses" (as in Luke 24:48 and Acts 1:22) to "one who dies because he witnesses" (perhaps Rev. 2:13). Within the early church a distinction was made between those who confessed before the authorities and survived and those who died (see, e.g., Eusebius, HE 5.2.2-4).

Persecution was not a constant threat for early Christians, as we might think, but still was a real possibility that all Christians had to consider. A few Christians provoked the authorities, but they and others who came forward asking for martyrdom did not represent the church at large. The church generally took the position that one should be faithful if brought to trial, but should not seek out death. Witnesses from the early church vary somewhat on their view of martyrdom. Tertullian, the North African lawyer, showed enthusiasm for martyrdom in the Montanist phase of his life (*De fuga in persecutione* 9), but this attitude was also present in the Orthodox church (*To Scapula* 5). Also the way in which Christians faced persecution leading to martyrdom led some observers to convert to Christianity, as in the case of Justin; pagans, such as Marcus Aurelius (*Meditations* 11.3), treated this enthusiasm with contempt. However, the number of Christians who fell away or went into hiding exceeded those who died. Martyrs, consequently, were esteemed as heros of the church, as the first martyrology, *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (ca. 155/6 or 167) shows. Also a theology of martyrdom developed beginning with Ignatius's letter to the Romans growing into the second and third generation.

The persecution of Decius and Diocletian made the greatest number of martyrs in the third and fourth centuries. In the third century, veneration of the martyrs spread and with the peace of the fourth and fifth centuries, the honor bestowed on martyrs was almost boundless. In Persia, martyrs continued to be made during the fourth and fifth centuries.

Literature of Martyrdom

Accounts of martyrdom come in two forms: *passiones* or *martyria* and the *acta* or *gesta*. *Passions* told of the last days of martyrs while *acts* recount the martyrs' trials before the authorities. Examples of the passions include *Letter of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne* (ca. 177; cf. Eusebius, HE, 5.1.3-63) and the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, which includes portions of Perpetua's diary. Examples of Acts would be *Acts of Justin* (preserved in three recensions) and the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* (included in this issue of ***Carolina Christian***).

Another form of literature associated with martyrdom were exhortations to martyrdom. Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian and Pseudo-Cyprian all contributed to this genre. Their purpose was to encourage Christians to face bravely their impending persecution and possible martyrdom.

Theology

The early church gave a rich interpretation to martyrdom. Martyrdom was a grace that God did not grant everyone. Since one could not always choose martyrdom, there grew a strong sense that God chose particular individuals for this event. To be chosen was to be counted worthy of God and because of this, Christians were urged not to rush into it. Martyrdom was considered an imitation and participation in the suffering of Christ much as baptism and the Eucharist were viewed. Christ was said to be present with the martyr; the Holy Spirit filled the martyrs and embolden them with eloquence. Martyrdom was war against the devil and his demon in which the death of the saint was victory over the devil. Athletic imagery was common in this regard. Of course, given the force of this theology, martyrs were assured a place in heaven—and denial brought eternal punishment. As a baptism of blood, martyrdom came to be seen as a grace bringing the forgiveness of sins. (Patristic references can be found in Everett Ferguson, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* [New York and London: Garland, 1990], s.v., "Martyr, Martyrdom.")

Because the confessors were viewed as having the Holy Spirit (based on Luke 12.11, 12), the soon-to-be martyrs and confessors were viewed as having the power to forgive sins and to reconcile the penitent to the church.

Cult

Martyrdom laid the foundation of "sainthood" as understood in the later Catholic Church. The cult of the martyrs was based on the promises that were granted them: forgiveness of sin, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. Martyrs, considered perfect disciples, were believed to immediately gain their reward and thus by-passed the general resurrection of the dead and the intermediate state of the dead. Martyrs thus could intercede on behalf of the faithful left on earth; prayer to a martyr was based on their special position and the practice of Christians interceding for one another. This, however, was not understood to be praying apart from any reference to the Lord: the martyrs were his servants and did not become a cult separate from Christ. Prayer to the departed saint, though odd-sounding today, would have been consistent with ancient ideas, both Greek and Roman, of the rapport that the dead had with the living.

4th Annual
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Guest speakers from ***Faulkner University*** will present lessons on the theme and students from Faulkner will lead discussion groups. ***Cornerstone***, a Faulkner group, will perform. This is the first Carolina Youth Rally for 1995. In addition to the Bible Study there will be fun, food, and Christian fellowship in abundance.

For more information, contact:
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Archdale Church of Christ
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Greeks and Romans held meals in honor of a deceased family member yearly on the person's birthday. This practice continued in the church with important modifications. The meal was held on the anniversary of death instead of birth—the martyr's death was considered his or her birthday to eternity. The family was now the Christian community instead of the individual's family. The celebrations were first local, but as time went on, the churches began to borrow one another's saints. Thus, the commemorative meals of paganism were incorporated into the agape feast and Eucharist of Christianity.

The cult became public after the official recognition of the church. Great pomp attended the ceremonies dedicated to the deceased and many of the faithful participated. The relics of the saints were regarded as having power to heal and power over the demonic. Pilgrims to the martyrs' burial sites left inscriptions requesting the saint to pray for them. One of the most fantastic outgrowths of "sainthood" was the finding of remains of martyrs hitherto forgotten or unknown. The first recorded example of transfering the bones from their original burial site to a more suitably religious location was that of Babylas of Antioch (recorded by the historian Sozomen, *Church History*, 5.19). Even the pagan Greeks and Romans would have found this sacrilegious.

Dr. Ferguson is professor emeritus *of church history at Abilene Christian University. He granted us permission to rewrite and condense this information from his article "Martyr, Martyrdom" in the* Encyclopedia of Early Christianity, *edited by him and others. For fuller bibliographical information, we encourage the reader to see this excellent resource on the early church.*

Word Study

From *Witness* to *Martyr*

By Stanley N. Helton

THE JUNE 1993 NUMBER OF *CAROLINA Christian* carried a piece by me entitled, "You Can't Get There from Here: Reflections on 'Word Studies,'" where I discussed some basic word-study fallacies, such as misuse of etymology, anachronism, and the root-word fallacy. I also distinguished between a diachronic and synchronic word-study; the former dealing with the evolution of a word over time, and the latter with how people used a word at a particular time within a limited context.

For this issue we examine the (diachronic) development of the word *martyr.* In Classical Greek the word dealt with "making an active appearance and statements as a witness"; this is what we find in Homer. From the fifth century the verbs *martyreo*, meaning "to bear witness" can be found as well as the noun *martyrion* for the "evidence" itself. According to Coenen, "The original setting of the word-group in the G[ree]k world is clearly the legal sphere." One interesting turn in this word-group's development, considering later Christian usage of the word, is that *martyria*, testimony, came to express moral or philosophical convictions. The Cynic and Stoic philosophers regarded themselves as witnesses to give evidence on behalf of divine truth, in that they testified to the truth of what they believed by their conduct in adverse circumstances. (See *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978], s.v. Witness, Testimony," by L. Coenen.) This, however, falls short of giving up your life in "martyrdom" as developed in the Early Christianity.

When we look to the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX), we find that our word-groups translates the same basic idea, that of giving testimony. The noun *martyrion* occurs over 290 times, found frequently in Exodus, Numbers, and Leviticus and used frequently of the two tablets of "testimony" (e.g., Exod. 31:18; 32:15) and the tent of "testimony (Exod. 29:4, 10,11; 40:2ff; Lev. 4:4ff; et al.).

In the Inter-Testamental literature, where we find increasing examples of people suffering for their faith, the word-group, including *martys*, is lacking, leading scholars, like N. Brox, to conclude that "the Old Testament and later Judaism are excluded as the place of origin of the *title* of martyr" (emphasis mine) as it developed in the early church.

For the New Testament we consult the standard New Testament lexicon, Walter Bauer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, translated and adapted by William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. μαρτυς, μαρτυρος, 494, and we find that in the Hellenistic period, people used the word in the following senses: (1) literally, a witness with a "legal" sense; (2) figuratively of anyone who can or should testify to anything: (a) of God, (b) of any kind of human witnessing by eye and ear, (c) of witnesses who bear a divine message; (3) in the persecuted church the word came to be mean one who witnessed unto death, a martyr.

In the New Testament, examples of this last sense might be Acts 22:20; Revelation 2:13; and 17:6, but in these passages the death of the witness is clear through modifiers, showing the evolution of the word from merely "witness" to "martyr" was still incomplete.

A closer look at New Testament usage shows that our word-group maintains its basic meaning—"testifying for someone or something." but we also notice, particularly in Luke's writings and the Johannine writings some new aspects. For example, in Acts 23:11, *martyresai*, to witness, occurs for the first time in the sense of proclaiming Christ. But two things are clear in Luke's presentation of the witness theme: the way of the witness is the way of rejection and possibly death; and that a witness of Jesus proclaims the full message of Jesus.

In John's gospel, where *martyria*, or merely "witnessing" is clearly an important theological idea. This word-group, excluding the word *martys*, which occurs only in Revelation in John's writings, expresses the event of divine revelation, that is, that the Son bear complete witness to the Father.

When we come to Revelation (ca. A.D. 96) we begin to see the word *martys* taking on the idea of one who witnessed to the point of death. In Revelation 2:13, Antipas's description as "my faithful witness" (an echo of 1:5—Jesus' death was regarded as the first martyrdom; cf. also Rev. 3:14) is explained by the phrase, "who was put to death among you." In Rev. 17:6, where the "harlot is drunk on the blood of the saint and on the blood of the witnesses of Jesus, the mention of "blood" makes it clear the witnesses have died for their testimony.

Some fifty years later, in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, we find the first use of "martyr" and cognates as uncontested terms for those who died because of their testimony (MPol. 1:1; 2:2; 14:2; 15:2; 16:2; 17:3; and 19:1). In MPol. 2:2, for example, we read "Blessed and noble are all the martyrdoms (τα μαρτυρια παντα) that took place by God's will."

Some Final Observations

A diachronic word-study seeks to understand how a word develops over time. It would be erroneous to take the later meaning of *martys* as one who died for their testimony back to Homer, or the LXX, or even the NT (though a few instances in Acts and Revelation point in that direction), since at a previous time the word did not carry the idea of dying. It would be equally erroneous to suggest that the idea of "witnessing" is missing in the later usage. Again, how the people at a specific time used the word is the determinate in what the word meant.

But, as believers living almost two thousand years removed, we ought to ask what value can the witness motif have for the church in the twentieth, and even the twenty-first, century. First, the frequency of the theme in the NT underscores the historical foundations of Christianity. Jesus actually lived, died, was buried, and rose again. A fact confirmed by eyewitnesses (cf. αυτοπται) in Luke 1:2). These eyewitnesses or apostles occupy a special place in this holy history, so that while it is appropriate to speak of the continuing church as witnesses, we understand that we do not perform the same role as did the original witnesses. (See Søren Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* for the view the "followers at second hand" are actually in a more advantageous position than the original eyewitnesses; we have less temptation to see with our eyes only!)

Secondly, this witness motif is especially pertinent to this age of disbelief, to this age of bewilderment and questioning. In an age or pluralism and when absolute truth must be denied to support that pluralism, the need for witnessing becomes even more important. (See David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology* and his sequel *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993 and 1994) for a full discussion of this theme).

And, thirdly, faithful witnessing often entails suffering and persecution. Jesus predicted it and we should expect it.

Finally, I want to share three ideas implied by the witness motif with preachers and teachers of the Christian message. (1) Witnesses are passionately involved in the case they seek to present. (2) Witnesses are held accountable for the truthfulness of their testimony. (3) Witnesses must be faithful not only to the bare facts of the Christ-event, but also to their meaning. This is where the Christian tradition becomes invaluable. (These final thoughts are reflected in A. A. Trites's summary of "Witness, Testimony" in NIDNTT, cited earlier).

An interesting footnote is not out of place here. Sometimes members of the churches of Christ resist the use of the word "witness" as a synonym for sharing the gospel, or to telling others what the Lord has done for them. "To witness," as supported by the above study, is quite biblical (cf. Acts 23:11) and, in fact, biblically mandated for the church of every age through the Great Commission. Besides, if we, as members of Christ's church are not his witnesses today, who are?

Preludes to Martyrdom: Pre-Christian Influences on the Concept of Martyrdom

By Terry Seufferlein

THE OLD TESTAMENT DOES NOT clearly identify any of its characters as martyrs. Indeed, "martyr" as a technical term did not arise until the period of the early church. However, although the word "martyr" may not have been used in its technical sense in the pre-Christian era, the concept of martyrdom finds deep roots in the Old Testament and Inter-Testamental periods.

Precise definitions of martyrdom may vary, the early church considered a martyr anyone who chose death rather than renouncing his or her faith. This description embodies three elements: (1) physical death (2) which is voluntarily accepted (3) because of one's faith. Those who confessed their faith before the authorities but were not put to death were called "confessors."

Martyrdom and Voluntary Death

The Old Testament records six cases of voluntary death: Abimelech (Judg. 9:54); Samson (Judg. 16:26–30); Saul and his armor-bearer (1 Sam.31:4–5); Ahithophel (2 Sam.17:23); and Zimri (1 Kings 16:18–19). Of these, Samson is the closest thing to a martyr, but his death is as much revenge upon the Philistines as humble acceptance of his fate. None of the others could be called martyrs—most were merely attempts to hasten their own death (e.g., Abimelech, Saul) or to avoid persecution (Saul's armor-bearer, Ahithophel, and Zimri). As Augustine pointed out many centuries later, "It is the reason why, not the suffering, that makes the martyr" (*Epist.* 89.2).

Persecution of the Prophets

More relevant to the discussion of martyrdom is the persecution of the Old Testament prophets. For example, Jezebel sought to kill Elijah because of his prophecies. Elijah was not martyred, since he escaped death, but he feared the Israelites who, under the influence of Jezebel, had put many prophets to death with the sword (1 Kings 19:10, 14). Another prophet who faced death was Uriah (Jer. 26:20—23). He prophesied against Jerusalem and King Jehoiakim, and was subsequently put to death. One may question the relevance here to martyrdom, since Uriah attempted to escape from his persecutors.

Although the Old Testament does not consider the prophets "martyrs," later generations looked to them as examples for inspiration. *Lives of the Prophets*, probably written in the first century, claims to record the endings of various prophets. According to this record, Isaiah was sawn in two; Jeremiah was stoned by the people; Ezekiel was killed by the king of Israel; Micah was killed by Joram; Amos was tortured and killed by Amaziah; and Zechariah was killed by King Joash near the altar. Although the historical veracity of these events may be questioned, the book reflects the popular perception that the prophets were put to death for their faithfulness in their service to God. (For evidence that these traditions were circulated during the time of the New Testament, see Matthew 23:29-36).

Another work, *The Martyrdom of Isaiah*, tells how the prophet Isaiah was sawn in two for his prophecies. "And while Isaiah was being sawn in half, he did not cry out, or weep, but his mouth spoke with the Holy Spirit until he was sawed in two" (5.14). While it is difficult to date this document, Hebrews 11:37 may be evidence that this tradition was also widely circulated by the first century.

The spirit of faithfulness implicit in the earlier prophets becomes explicit in the book of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon built a gold image 90 feet high. He decreed that everyone must fall down and worship this image, or be thrown into a blazing furnace. When the time came, three Hebrews refused to bow before the image. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (the Hebrew names for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) were brought before the King and charged with disobedience to the King. The three youths responded, "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not . . . we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up" (Dan. 3:17–18, NIV). Of course, God saved these three from death, so they cannot be called martyrs, but clearly their story was told to encourage a spirit of martyrdom.

Similarly, Daniel himself was thrown into a den of lions when he continued to pray to God, despite a royal decree from King Darius (Dan. 6). Again, God delivered Daniel from death, but the point is made clear that Daniel remained faithful to God, even in the face of death. Indeed, the entire book of Daniel was written to encourage faithfulness to God during difficult times. Daniel prophesied about a time when a Gentile king will "vent his fury against the holy covenant" (11:30), who will desecrate the temple, and who will force the Jews to violate the covenant. During this time, the faithful will "fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered...so that they may be refined, purified, and made spotless until the time of the end" (11:33–35).

Martyrdom in the Maccabean Period

The Maccabean period, which Daniel foresaw, is a time when a severe persecution arose against God's people. In 175 B.C., the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes took control of Palestine. No lover of the Jewish people, Antiochus IV desecrated the temple, burned copies of Scripture, and forced the Jews to participate in pagan practices. Antiochus IV also issued a decree forbidding the observance of any Jewish practices, and any Jew who refused to obey the king's edict was put to death.

2 Maccabees, written about 100 B.C., records two events during this period which had significant influence upon later generations. The first account concerns a 90 year old scribe named Eleazar (2 Macc. 6:18–31). Guards forced Eleazar's mouth open and stuffed in pig's flesh, but Eleazar, "welcoming death with honor rather than life with pollution, went up to the rack of his own accord, spitting out the flesh" (6:19). His friends encouraged him to bring his own meat, and substitute it for the pork—that way he could pretend to eat pig's flesh (and thus preserve his life) without actually defiling himself. But Eleazar would have none of this pretense, lest the young be led astray by his example. "Therefore, by bravely giving up my life now, I will show myself worthy of my old age and leave to the young a noble example of how to die a good death willingly and nobly for the revered and holy laws" (6:28). So Eleazar willingly went to the rack, where he was tortured to death, proclaiming his faith to the end.

Perhaps the most famous story of this period concerns a Jewish mother and her seven sons (2 Macc. 7:1-42. This devout family refused to eat the flesh of pigs, preferring to obey God rather than men. When news of this reached the ears of the officials, the family was brought in and beaten with whips. One of the sons defied the king, saying, "What do you intend to ask and learn from us? For we are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our fathers." The king became furious, and had pans and cauldrons heated over a fire. The king ordered the son's tongue cut out, his hands and feet cut off, and his scalp torn off; then he had the son cast into a pan, still breathing, to be cooked to death in front of his mother and brothers.

A second son was brought forward, scalped, and ordered to eat the pig's flesh. He refused, and was likewise thrown over the fire. When they came to cut out the tongue of the third son, he boldly stuck his tongue out, and offered his limbs as well, saying, "It was heaven that gave me these limbs; and for the sake of his laws I disdain them, for I hope to receive them back again." The soldiers were amazed at his bravery, but then tortured and killed him, too. The fourth, fifth, and sixth sons were likewise mutilated and burned alive over the fire. Throughout this torture the mother urged each son to remain faithful, and with their last words each proclaimed his faith in God.

Antiochus, realizing he was being made the fool, turned to the seventh son and offered him great riches and power if he would abandon the practices of his fathers. The son refused. The king, enraged and desperate, begged the mother to talk some sense into her son. She agreed, but leaning close to her son she whispered in their traditional language, urging him to fear God and bravely accept his death. Thus encouraged, the last son proclaimed his faith in the power and the righteousness of God, acknowledging that God would reward the righteous and punish the evil. Antiochus, stinging from the rebuke, tortured the boy more severely than the rest, then threw him onto the fire. Finally, the mother, after seeing her seven sons maimed and killed, was also abused and murdered.

Influence of Maccabean Martyrs

These "Maccabean martyrs" had great influence upon later generations; in fact, they are the only martyrs commemorated by both Jews and Christians. In the first century A.D., the Jewish author of 4 Maccabees builds his entire work around these events, embellishing them into 13 chapters. 4 Maccabees presents the victims even more willing to suffer for their beliefs. For example, after a lengthy speech, the seventh son "flung himself into the braziers and so gave up his life" (12:19). Likewise, when the mother was also about to be seized and put to death, it is said "she threw herself into the flames so that no one might touch her body" (17:1). Another development in this work is that the death of these martyrs is seen as a ransom for the nation's sins (17:21–22).

The spirit of the Maccabean martyrs was such that the early church was eager to claim them for their own. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage in the mid-third century, wrote a letter in which he encourages his readers to martyrdom by pointing to the examples of biblical characters. After a discussion of Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, and Daniel, he continues: "What of the oppressive torments of the blessed martyrs in the Maccabees and the manifold punishments of the seven brothers and the mother comforting her children in punishments and dying herself also with the children? Do not the documents testify to great virtue and to faith and exhort us by their sufferings to the triumph of martyrdom?" (*Letters*, 58.6). Cyprian was not merely spouting words: he gave his life in martyrdom in 258.

Origen (also in the mid-third century) saw his father martyred for his Christian faith. Years later, when his friend Ambrosius had been imprisoned, Origen wrote *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, encouraging his friend to be faithful to the end. After a detailed retelling of the accounts of Eleazar, the seven brothers and the mother in 2 Maccabees, Origen concludes: "I think it extremely useful for what lies ahead to tell the story I have summarized from Scripture, so that we may see how much power against the harshest suffering and the deepest tortures there is in religion and in the spell of love for God.... We can also learn from this what martyrdom is like and how much confidence toward God it produces" (*Exhortation to Martyrdom*, 27).

Conclusion

In the centuries that followed, the stories of Eleazar and the pious mother and her seven sons surfaced repeatedly as examples for those in the church. These join a long line of martyrs, testifying to the righteousness of God, and inspiring His church to faithfulness—even unto death.

Contact Terry Seufferlein at 5801 Granby Street, Norfolk, VA 23505.

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Primary Source

The Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs

Edited with notes by Stanly N. Helton

The Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs, one of the earliest, if not the earliest, documents in Christian Latin is an acta or gesta, a genre that recounts the martyr's trial before the authorities. (A characteristic of the Latin acts was the formula Deo gratias ["thanks to God"] that readers will note below). The Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs recounts the trial of twelve martyrs from Scilli, an unidentified place in Africa Proconsularis (North Africa). Besides that their martyrdom took place July 17, 180, we know nothing of these faithful Christians.

A basilica was later erected over their tomb and its name often appears in the works of ancient Christian writers. The basilica was built near the monastery of Biguas in Africa. Relics of the martyrs were preserved at Kherbet Oum el Ahdam in 359 and at Dermech, near Carthage. Their bodies were moved to St. John's basilica in Lyons (now France) during the time of Charlemagne. Augustine (354–430), in a sermon in their honor, indicates the account was read on their designated feast day. (See Encyclopedia of the Early Church, vol. 2, edited by Angelo Di Berardino, translated by Adrian Walford [New York: Oxford University Press, 1992], s.v. "Scillitani" by V. Saxer.)

This translation, though adapted (and in some places re-translated) by me [SNH], is based on H. Musurillo, The Acts of the Christian Martyrs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 86-89. Brackets ([]) indicate editorial clarification of the Latin behind the translation.

The Text

On July 17 in the consulship of Praesens (his second) and Claudian [thus A.D. 180], Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus [Veturius, Felix, Aquilinus, Laetantius, Januaria, Generosa,][1] Donata, Secunda, and Vestia were tried at Carthage in the proconsul's chambers.

The proconsul Saturninus[2]: "If you return to your senses, you can receive the pardon of our lord [*dominus*] the emperor."

2. Speratus: "We have never done wrong; we have never given ourselves to evil. Never have we uttered a curse; but when abused, we have given thanks, for we respect our emperor."[3]

3. Saturninus the proconsul: "We too are a religious people, and our religion is a simple one. We swear by the genius of our lord [*dominus*] the emperor and we pray for his health—as you also ought to do."

4. Speratus: "If you will give me a calm hearing, I will tell you of the mystery of simplicity."

5. Saturninus: "If you begin to slander our sacred rites, I will not listen to you. But swear rather by the Genius of our lord [*dominus*] the emperor."

6. Speratus: "I do not recognize the empire of this world. Instead I serve that God whom no one has seen, nor can see, with these eyes. I have not stolen; and on any purchase I pay the tax because I acknowledge my Lord [*dominus*] who is the emperor of kings and all nations."[4]

7. The proconsul Saturninus (to the others): "Give up this persuasion."

Speratus: "It is an evil persuasion to murder [and] to give false testimony."

8. Saturninus the proconsul: "Have no part in this craziness of his."

Cittinus: "We have no one else to fear but our Lord [*dominus*] God who is in heaven."

9. Donata: Honor Caesar as Caesar; but we ourselves fear God."

Vestia: "I am a Christian."

Secunda: "I wish to be what I am."

The proconsul Saturninus (to Speratus): Are you convinced [as a] Christian?

10. Speratus: "I am a Christian." And they all agreed with him.

Saturninus the proconsul: "Do you not want time for consideration?"

Speratus: "In this matter there is no need for consideration."

12. Saturninus the proconsul: "What [evidence, support] do you have in your case?"

Speratus: "Books and letters of a just man Paul."[5]

13. Saturninus the proconsul: "You have a reprieve of 30 days; think it over."

Once again Speratus said, "I am a Christian!" and they all consented with him.

14. Saturninus the proconsul read his decision from a tablet: "Whereas Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Donata, Vestia, Secunda, and the others have confessed they they have been living in accordance with the rites of the Christians, and whereas though given the opportunity to return to the practices of the Romans they have persisted in their obstinacy,[6] they are hereby sentenced to be executed by the sword."

15. Speratus: "We thank God [*Deo gratias agimus*]!"

Nartzalus: "Today we are martyrs in heaven. Thanks be to God [*Deo gratias*]!"

16. Saturninus the proconsul had the following proclaimed by a herald: "Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Veturius, Felix, Aquilinus, Laetantius, Januaria, Generosa, Vestia, Donata, Secunda, are to be led away [to execution]."

17. They all said, "Thanks be to God [*Deo gratias]*!" And immediately they were beheaded for the name of Christ.

End Notes

[1] From the end of the document we pick up six names apparently omitted at this point in the extant manuscripts. See §16 below for the full list, but note that §14 has the abbreviated list which may be the cause of the error in §1.

[2] P. Vigellius Saturninus is mentioned by Tertullian (c. A.D. 200), *Ad Scapulam* 3.4, who lists Saturninus among those who "realized that had sinned by torturing the Christians." Tertullian notes that he was the first to prosecute Christians in that province and that (as punishment) he lost his eyesight.

[3] As our word "lord" can be used of both God and man, the Latin *dominus* could mean either "lord" or "Lord." This also applies to the Greek *kurios*, the word used to translate the Hebrew Tetragrammaton YHWH, or Jehovah, and when Christ is referred to as "Lord."

[4] Notice how Speratus avoids using *dominus* in reference to Caesar, reserving it only for God.

[5] This shows the influence of Paul on the formation of Western Christianity and how the canon had not yet come fully together.

[6] Both Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 121–180) and Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus (Pliny the Younger), legate of Bithynia and Pontus from 111 to 113, noted obstinacy or contumacy as a trait of Christians facing martyrdom.

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Christians and Culture

"LIVING IN THE WORLD, WITHOUT LIVING AS THE WORLD"

Ron Newberry, Guest Editor

Primary Source

Pliny's Letter to Trajan and Trajan's Reply

Editor's Note: Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus, more affectionally known as Pliny the Younger, lived from A.D. 61 to around 113. Pliny left, in addition to a *Panegyric on the Emperor Trajan*, ten books of letters, the first nine being literary in nature while the last consists of administrative letters from him to the Emperor Trajan (reigned 98–117) concerning affairs in the province of Bithynia where he served as governor (*legatus Augusti*). In letter 10.96 and 97, we have Pliny's request for guidance in handling the Christians and Trajan's reply. The following translation is from Henry Bettenson, ed., Documents of the Christian Church, 2nd ed. (London, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1963).

The Text

"It is my rule, Sir, to refer to you in matters where I am uncertain. For who can better direct my hesitation or instruct my ignorance? I was never present at any trial of Christians; therefore I do not know what are the customary penalties or investigations, and what limits are observed. I have hesitated a great deal on the question whether there should be any distinction of ages; whether the weak should have the same treatment as the more robust; whether those who recant should be pardoned, or whether a man who has ever been a Christians should gain nothing by ceasing to be such; whether the name itself, even if innocent of crime, should be punished, or only the crimes attaching to that name.

"Meanwhile, this is the course that I have adopted in the case of those brought before me as Christians. I ask them if they are Christians. If they admit it I repeat the question a second and third time, threatening capital punishment; if they persist I sentence them to death. For I do not doubt that, whatever kind of crime it may be to which they have confessed, their pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy should certainly be punished. There were others who displayed a like madness and whom I reserve to be sent to Rome, since they were Romans citizens.Thereupon the usual result followed: the very fact of my dealing with the question led to a wider spread of the charge, and a great variety of cases were brought before me. An anonymous pamphlet was issued, containing many names. All who denied that they were or had been Christians I considered should be discharged, because they called upon the gods at my dictation and did reverence, with incense and wine, to your image which I had ordered to be brought forward for this purpose, together with the statues of the deities; and especially because they cursed Christ, a thing which, it is said, genuine Christians cannot be induced to do. Others named by the informer first said that they were Christians and then denied it; declaring that they had been but were so no longer, some having recanted three years or more before and one or two as long ago as twenty years. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the gods and cursed Christ. But they declared that the sum of their guilt or error had amounted only to this, that on an appointed day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak, and to recite a hymn antiphonally (Lat. *carmen dicere secum invicem*) to Christ, as to a god, and to bind themselves by an oath (Lat. *sacramentum*), not for the commission of any crime but to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery and breach of faith, and not to deny a deposit when it was claimed. After the conclusion of this ceremony it was their custom to depart and meet again to take food; but it was ordinary and harmless food, and they had ceased this practice after my edict in which, in accordance with your orders, I had forbidden secret societies. I thought it the more necessary, therefore, to find out what truth there was in this by applying torture to two maidservants, who were called deaconesses (Lat. *ministrae*). But I found nothing but a depraved and extravagant superstition, and I therefore postponed my examination and had recourse to you for consultation.

"The matter seemed to me to justify my consulting you, especially on account of the number of those imperilled; for many person of all ages and classes and of both sexes are being put in peril by accusation, and this will go on. The contagion of this superstition has spread not only in the cities, but in the villages and rural districts as well; yet it seems capable of being checked and set right. There is no shadow of doubt that the temples, which have been almost deserted are beginning to be frequented once more, that the sacred rites which have been long neglected are being renewed, and that sacrificial victims are for sale everywhere, whereas, till recently, a buyer was rarely to be found. From this it is easy to imagine what a host of men could be set right, were they given a chance of recantation."

Trajan's Reply to Pliny

"You have take the right line, my dear Pliny, in examining the cases of those denounced to you as Christians, for no hard and fast rule can be laid down, of universal application. They are not to be sought out; if they are informed against, and the charge is proved, they are to be punished, with this reservation—that if any one denies that he is a Christian, and actually proves it, that is by worshipping our gods, he shall be pardoned as a result of his recantation, however, suspect he may have been with respect to the past. Pamphlets published anonymously should carry no weight in any charge whatsoever. They constitute a very bad precedent, and are also out of keeping with this age."

Editors's Note: If you are interested in reading more about how the Romans viewed the Christians, I suggest Stephen Benko, Pagan Rome and the Early Christians *(Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984); Robert L. Wilken,* The Christians as the Romans Saw Them *(New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984); or more exhaustive than the first two, Robin Lane Fox,* Pagans and Christians *(New York: Knopf, 1987).*

Book Reviews

By Tim Sensing

Lavender, Earl and Glenn, Robert. *The Church of God's Intent: Strategies for Renewal.* Brentwood, TN: Lochland Press, 1993.

THE CHURCH GROWTH MOVEMENT has generated both admirers and enemies in the past few decades. This volume is designed to begin with the Bible as the foundation to the principles for the nature of the church. By beginning with the doctrine of the church, the authors offer strategies for renewal.

The Church Growth Movement at times has been guilty of asking the wrong questions such as: How do we better market the church? How do we get more members in this church? Ill will is often generated due to allowing secular theory dominate what churches do. Lavender and Glenn do not neglect culture and the methods that have proven successful in today's world, however, they begin with a sound theology of the church that informs them what to accept and/or reject from the world. The ideas of this book therefore are not rooted in pragmatism or come from utilitarian motivations. That would make these suggestions "anthropocentric" or "man centered." Instead, the strategies that work derive from a "theocentric" or "God centered" motivation, namely, to accomplish God's purpose for the church.

Many congregations chase after the latest program that helps accomplish some task. As an example of the heart and soul of seeking God's intent is seen in the following quote: "Thus, we are not calling the members of a particular congregation to increased activity for the sake of a higher percentage of involvement. We are calling them to realize their ministry potential to the glory of God."

The term "change" excites us. Sometimes we have been excited to reacted negatively therefore holding on to the "status quo." The authors are not recommending change for change sake in order to meet the new needs of a changing society. Yet they do not advocate staying the same either. Change comes by examining the Scriptures anew so that growth toward the image of God by His people will occur. Then renewal will be a never ending process passed on to generation to generation. In the debate about change, this book offers a reasoned and balanced approach that seeks peace and unity.

Primarily using Ephesians, the authors identify the church as people and not an institution. They develop the idea the church is incarnational instead. In today's debate, the idea of "pattern" comes up often. The concept of "pattern" has both help and hindered our theology of the church. There is a danger of restoring any pattern without knowing function of the design. External practice is always connected to internal intent. These authors advocate using the life and ministry of Christ as the pattern of the church which is people. Therefore it is not the New Testament Church that needs restoring but the church of God's will. People need restoring. 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 are the primarily texts to describe how Christians are to function as the body of Christ and the leaders.

The last half of the book gives suggestions to strategic planning including vision, assessment, goal setting, mission statements, and leadership structure. Much of this material is a summary of the Church Growth literature on the subject. It is communicated in terms of our fellowship and written in an easy to read style. *Contact Tim Sensing at PO Box 1861, Burlington, NC 27217-1861.*

Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

MOCKSVILLE, NC...Harding University Graduate School of Religion is planning to offer an extension course at Carolina Bible Camp & Retreat Center for the Spring Quarter. The course, 573 "Basic Counseling," will be taught by Dr. Allen Isom. The classes will meet for four Friday-Saturday sessions. Dates are January 13–14; Feb. 10–11; March 3–4; April 7–8. The course is a 3-hour course and may be taken for either graduate or undergraduate credit, or it may be audited for a special reduced audit fee of $80. This would be an excellent way for preachers and elders who must do counseling in local church settings to sharpen their skills as well as to share in a meaningful learning experience with other church leaders in the Carolinas. (At this writing there are not enough students for this class to make. However, Dr. Isom will be present on Friday, Jan. 13 for the first session. Those interested in participating in this course can register at the first session.) For more information contact Steve McLeod, Director of Admissions at 1-800-680-0809. AUSTIN, TX...Many congregations of the Lord's people have been established through the efforts of World Bible School in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Surinam, Ethiopia, and Egypt. If you would like more information on how you or your congregation can get involved with this work, contact Tex Williams at World Bible School, PO Box 9346, Austin, TX 78766. PARKERSBURG, WV...Ohio Valley College announces that it is now a full-fledged senior college with the regionally accredited multiple baccalaureate programs. Dr. Keith Stotts, college president, announces that they have also agreed to purchase a Catholic seminary that will add 134 acres to the campus. With the fulltime student enrollment up 20% for the second semester, th college is excited about its future. MOCKSVILLE, NC...Carolina Bible Camp & Retreat Center, Inc. supporters are producing a cookbook featuring recipes from church members across the Carolinas, former CBC campers, and supporters of Christian camping everywhere. The cookbook will be a quality production, one to be treasured and to be given with pride as a gift. For information on submitting a recipe and for placing pre-publication offers, write to Betty Woodhouse, Cookbook Committee Chairman, PO Box 52276, Raleigh, NC 27612.

Send News Items to Michael R. Mobley, PO Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115-0312.

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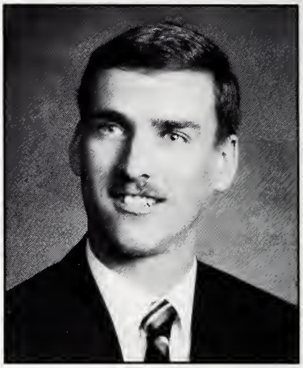

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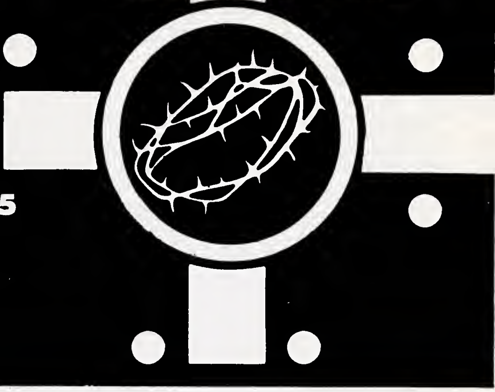
VOL. 37, NO. 2 FEBRUARY 1995



Martyrdom in the Early Church (Part 2)

Carolina Christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
EDITORIAL & PUBLICATION STAFF
Johnny R. Melton, Editor
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
Jim Mullican, Associate Editor
Michael Mobley, News Editor
Tim Sensing, Book Review Editor

CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Road, Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: individual—$8/year ($15/2 years and $22/3 years); club of five or more—$7.50 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles—50¢/copy/month, or church mailing list (minimum 15) 60¢/copy/month.

Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes with Form 3579 to:
Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Address editorial matter to:
Johnny R. Melton
3305 12th Avenue Place, SE
Conover, NC 28613-9609

Address news items to:
Michael Mobley
PO Box 312
Mooresville, NC 28115

Address commercial advertising inquiries to:
Jacobs List, Inc.
PO Box 120
Clinton, SC 29325

Address all advertisng pertaining to the churches of Christ or its members (including related organizations) to the editor.

All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 10.

Order from Carolina Christian Bookstore, PO Box 1219, Yadkinville, NC 27055 (1-800-343-1081, Monday—Friday, 9:00—6:00).

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

THIS ISSUE OF ***CAROLINA CHRISTIAN*** is Part 2 of the study of Martyrdom in the Early Church. The January issue had articles that dealt with some of the technical side of the study, the articles in this issue are more concerned with application. We pray that this study will inspire and challenge our readers to greater devotion both to God and to the church.

In addition to the articles on "Martyrdom," this issue also contains three articles on "Forgiveness." These articles, written for the October 1994 issue which was guest-edited by Dr. Dan Blazer and Bailey Forrest, apply the principles of forgiveness articulated there. These compelling articles call us to practice Christianity in the trenches of life.

We need subscribers to ***Carolina Christian*** magazine. The postage increase imposed on us by the United States Post Office must be offset by increased revenues. We can increase revenues by raising the subscription rates (which we do not want to do) or by increasing the number of subscribers (which we do want to do). If you enjoy ***Carolina Christian***, why not renew your own subscription and then subscribe for a friend? Send subscription orders (new and renewals) to Jerry Senn, Managing Editor, 1975 Haywood Road, Hendersonville, NC 28739. For now the Subscription Rates remain: $8/year; $15/2 years; $22/3 years; $7.50/year in clubs of 5 or more; 60¢/copy/month for church mailing lists (15 min.); and 50¢/copy/month for church bundles (15 min.). Thanks for your help.❑

Associate Editorial

Predestination, Foreknowledge, or Free Will?

By Jim Mullican

A PREACHER TOLD A GROUP OF children, "God can do anything!"

A little boy asked, "Can God make a rock so big that even He can't move it?"

How would you answer that? A "yes" means that God can't move a rock, and a "no" means there is indeed something He can't do. Keep that problem in mind as we consider another.

Predestination

Augustine of Hippo taught that God foreordains our conduct. This was how he explained his early life of debauchery before he made a clean break with his past and set his heart on following Jesus. He believed that God had prevented his doing this earlier, so that his sins were really not his fault, but God's.

John Calvin enlarged on this idea of God's overruling man's choices. In 1559, he wrote in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, "By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he has decided in His own mind what He wishes to happen in the case of each individual. For all men are not created on an equal footing, but for some eternal life is preordained, for others eternal damnation..." (Book III, Chapter XXI).

These views obviously cannot stand in light of the New Testament. Peter says, "The Lord is not slow about His promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9, RSV). In light of this passage, if predestination were true, all would be saved, since God wills it, but Jesus teaches in Matthew 7:14 that comparatively few will choose salvation.

Foreknowledge

Those who take the Bible as their only guide have rightfully rejected predestination. However, the doctrine of God's foreknowledge, as taught by some, amounts to the same thing. Preachers and teachers have frequently stated that while God does not predestine what we will do, He does know what we will do before we do it.

Think about the implications of this doctrine. If God knows that on March 17, 1998, I will murder John Smith, that event is predestined. I cannot change it, or God would not know it will happen. Absolute foreknowledge is nothing but another term for predestination.

The Bible does not support this view. In 2 Kings 20:1–7, God sent Isaiah to Hezekiah to say, "Thus says the Lord, 'Set your house in order; for you shall die, you shall not recover.'" However, Hezekiah prayed, and God sent Isaiah back to tell him, "I will add fifteen years to your life." This passage presents a problem for those who hold to the idea that God knows all along what is going to happen. If God knew all along that Hezekiah would live another fifteen years, then we have the totally unacceptable conclusion that God lied to him the first time. Hebrews 6:18 says that God does not lie, and I refuse to accept a doctrine which makes God a liar.

Free Will

Obviously, the Bible teaches that each person has free will and chooses whether to obey God or Satan (Josh. 24:15; Rom. 1:28; Heb. 11:24,25; Rev. 22:17). God knows our character better than we know it ourselves, and on that basis can predict what we will do under a given set of circumstances, as when Peter was warned that he would deny Jesus (Matt. 26:34). God also has plans for the future which He works to bring about, and He has sometimes announced those in advance, but the role of specific individuals within those broad plans is not fixed.

Mordecai told Esther, when she debated risking her life to intercede for the Jews, "Think not that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Mordecai's point is that God will certainly not allow the Jews to be exterminated. He may have brought Esther to the palace so she could be His implement for delivering them, but it is still within her power to choose whether or not to cooperate. If she chooses not to fulfill God's plan for her, He will find another to use and will still accomplish His plan. However, Esther's fate will depend on the choice she makes by exercising her own free will.

Am I limiting God? No, I am accepting what He says about Himself. Obviously, there are things God cannot do, because they are contrary to His character. Lying is one of those things. When He chose to create us with free will, He relinquished the possibility of knowing what we would do with it.

God has a plan for your life as He did for Esther. He sets before you doors of opportunity. If you will not use them, He will find someone else, but you will experience the consequences of your own choice.

If I have misunderstood these passages, I would be happy to hear from anyone who can demonstrate from the Scriptures how I have erred. We all need to study carefully and align our thinking with the Bible. That is my goal here, and I solicit your help.❑

Contact Jim at RR 4 Box 30–A, Clyde, NC 28721.

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The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail

By Terry R. Burress

IN MATTHEW 16:18, JESUS DECLARES that He will build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. This verse has been the text of many restoration sermons on the theme of Jesus as the builder of one church, as opposed to the numerous churches founded by men. Believing that Jesus did build His church, this article focuses on the import of the latter part of the verse.

Jesus stated in strong, definite terms that He would build His church. Historically and biblically speaking, Jesus kept His promise. Men may argue over how, when, and why the church was established, but few disagree that it happened. Jesus made His promise while in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi, a city built on a limestone terrace at the foot of Mt. Hermon. It was here that Jesus turned to the disciples and asked, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" The answer was that the people saw Jesus as a prophet, due to His mighty works and wisdom. Sadly, this did not necessarily lead them to follow Him. Peter identified Jesus not only as the long-awaited Messiah, but also as the Son of God (Matt. 16:16).

Jesus, in declaring that the gates of hell would not prevail against His church, indicated that they would try. The church could (and should) expect opposition. Indeed, since the founding of the church a variety of forces, both political and religious, have opposed its existence. Jesus here paints a picture of the beautiful city of God contrasted by the dark, ugly city of death and Satan, as the two marched forth from their gates to do battle.

Jesus was first opposed by the Pharisees and the scribes, the ones who should have been most ready and willing to embrace Him. Twice they accused Him of being in league with demons (Matt. 9:34; 12:24), and denied He was the Son of David. At Nazareth, they recognized Him only as the son of a carpenter and were offended at His teachings (Matt. 13:54–57). The Pharisees eventually arrested Him and when Pilate confronted them with the innocence of Jesus, they said, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). So the Pharisees chose Caesar as king and crucified Jesus. It was a poor choice; Caesar would later seek to destroy them and would eventually be destroyed himself.

Tiberius Caesar learned of the miracles, resurrection and ascension of Jesus from Pilate and proposed to the Roman Senate that the deity of Christ be recognized. The senate refused and insisted on honoring the emperor instead of Christ. Tiberius who began as a moderate ruler soon became a ruthless tyrant who spared not even his own family. It was during this time that Pilate was deposed and banished, eventually taking his own life. Things began to fall apart for those who had cooperated to kill Jesus.

Tiberius was succeeded by Caligula who claimed deity and ruled in a ruthless and cruel fashion. He condemned Herod Antipas, who had beheaded the Baptist and tried Jesus (Luke 23:8–12), to banishment, where the latter died in misery. At the same time, Caiaphas, the high priest who tried Jesus (Matt. 26:57–66), was removed as high priest and replaced by Jonathan.

Caligula is eventually replaced by Domitius Nero, who ruled with extreme fury and tyranny. He had much of the Senate put to death, as well as several close family members. He is commonly credited with setting fire to Rome and blaming the Christians for it. This resulted in the persecution of the Christians. Nero is finally condemned by the Senate and kills himself, complaining there were none left to help him. After a period of political instability, Vespasian begins to rules and send soldiers under Titus to march against Judea and Galilee; in A.D. 70 they destroy Jerusalem, killing thousands of Jews and sending others into slavery. Their home was left desolate as predicted by Jesus (Matt. 23:37,38).

In spite of the periods of persecution the church prevailed. Christians were arrested and killed, yet the church continue to grow. Paul boast that the gospel was preached to every creature (Col. 1:23). According to Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* every apostle but John died a violent death. By the early fourth century, it is reported that the church had faced ten periods of major persecution, but had endured and prospered. The prediction of Jesus had proven true. Satan had opposed the church through apostasy and persecution, but in spite of his best efforts the church has prevailed.❑

Contact Terry at 1465 Cleckley Blvd., Orangeburg, SC 29116.

Persecution and Martyrdom in the First-Century Church

By Bruce Thweatt

WHEN YOU HEAR THE WORDS "martyr" and "persecution," likely the picture of lions devouring Christians in a Roman arena comes to mind. The earliest Christian martyrs were victims of Jewish persecution carried out as a matter of religious conviction. Much credit for the spread of the Gospel outside of Jerusalem has been given to this persecution by the Sanhedrin, and rightfully so, for this hostility did force Christians to flee Jerusalem

The story of Stephen paints a vivid picture of the early church holding bravely to the faith, even in the presence of death. Acts records several instances of persecution, some individual cases of martyrdom, and some general persecutions in which the church suffered as a whole. In such a setting of widespread persecution we meet Saul (Acts 8:1) acting as the agent of the Sanhedrin, opposing the heresies of this apostate sect. Saul exemplifies the persecution of the church by its Judaic roots. Just as the Sanhedrin arrested, beat, and then threatened Peter and John (Acts 4 and 6) to stop the spread of this embarrassing and heretical talk about Jesus, so, also, Saul carried these efforts out of Jerusalem in an attempt to stop the spread of this "Christ" sect. There is great irony in seeing Saul become Paul, and suffer the same zealous persecution he had inflicted on others.

Even the death of James, the brother of John, at the hands of Herod can be attributed to the Jewish leaders' desire to eradicate the sect of Jesus. According to Acts 12:2–3, Herod (whose violent death is recorded in Acts 12:20–23 and in Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* 19.8.2) executed James and arrested Peter because "he saw that it pleased the Jews." What we see in the early years of the church is only Jewish opposition bringing believers to trial and execution. Thus, as the church was forced out of Jerusalem and into Gentile areas, there was, for a time, relative peace enabling the church to grow in spite of intense opposition from the Jewish community.

Roman society at this time did not differentiate between Judaism and Christianity. Certainly the Jews themselves considered it to be a Jewish sect to be opposed for its blasphemous insistence that Jesus was the Messiah, and the Romans concurred in seeing Christianity as a sect of Judaism.

Judaism was an accepted religion under the Roman Empire based upon its stature as an ancestral religion. Roman law allowed, in fact required, that the ancestral religion of a people be honored and practiced, even when it was contradictory to the Roman religion sanctioned by the state. Though the Romans saw the Jews as odd (see Tacitus' [mis]understanding of the Jews in his *Histories* 5.1–13), and unreasonable for insisting that theirs was the only "true and living God," they nevertheless accepted the right of Jews to practice Judaism. When Roman law demanded sacrifices to the gods of Rome for the emperor, Jews were allowed to sacrifice to their God, and pray for the emperor.

Though the Roman government would not take action against Christians until Nero, the basis upon which Christians could be persecuted was already present in the tenuous acceptance of Judaism. Jews were not favorably treated by Roman authority, and the constant turmoil and agitation in the land of Palestine confirmed to Rome the idea that Jews were superstitious troublemakers who tried to make other people live by their rules.

Where the Romans insisted that all religions and gods be treated respectfully, the Jews insisted that only theirs was true and deserved respect.

When the Christians began to spread out into the empire, it was of little or no concern to the Roman government. They considered it to be just more Judaism. When the Jewish community in Corinth brought Paul before the Proconsul Gallio, he refused to listen saying that he was "unwilling to be a judge of these matters" (Acts 18:15). Then came Nero. In A.D. 64 Rome burned mysteriously. Because of his plans to rebuild Rome as a showcase for his own glory, Nero was accused of having set the fire intentionally. The historian Tacitus reports that Nero made the Christians scapegoats, diverting suspicion from himself: "Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and most mischievous superstition...broke out, not only in Judea...but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.

"Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus.... Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed" (Tacitus *Annals* 15.44.1–5).

The spectacles of torture and execution which Tacitus charges to Nero's account provide the Hollywood images with which we are so familiar. Christians were savagely and publicly executed in front of leering crowds as punishment for arson, which even Tacitus admits was a baseless charge. Tradition holds that it was during this brief, but terrible, outbreak that Paul was beheaded, and Peter crucified (*HE* 2.25.5). During this frenzied attack other charges surfaced against what Tacitus calls "a class hated for their abominations, called Christians." These Christians held a "most mischievous superstition" and were "convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred of mankind." The charge of abomination reflects widespread misunderstanding of the actual standards of Christian behavior, perhaps as a result of slander and rumor by hostile sources about the Lord's Supper being cannibalism (consider the doctrine of transubstantiation which eventually became orthodox in Rome, or the response of the people in John 6 to Jesus' statement: "I am the bread of life"); charges of immorality and incest concerning the love feast (remember the Nicolaitans in Revelation 2). The superstition would, of course, include the doctrine of resurrection, and possibly the "atheistic" idea that there was only one God. This concept of one God was "mischievous" because it denied the possibility that other religions were equally valid, a point of view adopted by Roman law. At any rate, the Neronian persecution makes clear that Christians were now divorced of their Jewish image, and were no longer protected by Rome's recognition of Judaism as an ancient religion.

Fortunately, Nero's attacks soon passed, but they were only the first of several waves of Roman repression. Domitian issued a proclamation expelling the Christians from Rome (*Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*; s.v. "Persecution" by Robert Lee Williams). Eusebius relates that this second organized persecution confiscated property, banished citizens and executed "great numbers of men...without a fair trial." He also notes that the apostle John was at this time banished to the isle of Patmos. The reason for this persecution (as noted by Hegesippus in Eusebius) was Domitian's fear of losing the throne to Christ.

Once the spotlight had focused on Christian peculiarities relating to Roman sensibilities, a constant friction between empire and church existed. G. E. M. de Sainte Croix calls it an effort on behalf of Roman liberalism to impose their law of universal tolerance on this new sect called Christians, which was not entitled to tolerance because it was not an ancestral religion, but a new and intolerant sect ("Why Were The Early Christians Persecuted?" *Past and Present* 26 (1963): 6–38). By this time it appears that the charge being prosecuted was simply, that of being a Christian. During the reign of the Emperor Trajan, Pliny the younger, governor of Bithynia, wrote the emperor asking: "whether the name itself, even if innocent of crime, should be punished, or only the crimes attaching to that name"? Pliny's question reveals his dilemma. There were no criminal charges, nor were there seditious or rebellious acts to be punished. The accused were only accused of being Christians. That the years of rumor and slander had borne fruit is evident in his willingness to put two female slaves to torture, only to find nothing criminal, other than what he called "contumacious and inflexible obstinacy."

Pliny's solution was to forbid "the meeting of any assemblies," thus opening the church to real charges of unlawful assembly when such restrictions were ignored. Even so, Trajan's reply shows that it was not criminal or rebellious behavior for which Christians were punished, but for their "obstinacy" in refusing to "do as the Romans do." He wrote to Pliny, "You have adopted the right course...in investigating the charges against the Christians.... Do not go out of your way to look for them.... If...the crime is proved, they must be punished.... Anonymous information ought not to be received in any sort of prosecution. It is introducing a very dangerous precedent, and is quite foreign to the spirit of our age" (Pliny *Letters* 10.97).

While Trajan did not desire an active search to root-out Christians, he was still convinced that their obstinate persistence in their intolerance was "against the spirit of our age" and must therefore be punished. Here is the lesson that we must learn. When intolerance is the only sin, and becomes punishable by law, we must choose whether to tolerate sin, or wear the name of Christ. In the days of Rome, that choice led to suffering and death "for the name of Christ." When the test of tolerance came to Rome, Christians declined to make the emperor's sacrifice. They were punished, not because Romans believed in the divinity of their emperor, but because Rome required all religion to be equally honored. Doesn't this sound familiar?❑

Contact Bruce Thweatt at 5905 Chimayo Drive, NW, Albuquerque, NM 87120.

Martyrdom in the Early Church

By Robert Curry

THOSE FAITHFUL TO THE CAUSE OF Christ eventually found themselves the focus of persecution leading to the death of men and women throughout the Christian world, especially after the first century. Here, in the early church, the concept of martyrdom developed.

Translated from the Greek *martys*, the basic idea was to be a witness, so therefore, a witness *of*, or *for* Christ. Paul (Acts 22:15) and Peter (1 Pet. 5:1) were witnesses, as were all the apostles (Acts 1:22). Jesus Himself was a faithful and true witness (Rev. 1:5; 3:14).

At some point the meaning of the term *martys* began to shift somewhat since being a witness of Christ brought the possibility of death. The persecution of the church gave rise to many individuals giving their lives for their faith in Christ. John saw a vision of "the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony (witness) of Jesus" (Rev. 20:4 NASV). We are familiar with the beheading of John the Baptist (Matt. 14:10) and the deaths of Stephen (Acts 7:58–80) and Antipas (Rev. 2:13). The impending executions of Paul (2 Tim. 4:6–8) and Peter (2 Pet.1:14) were anticipated in their final epistles. James, John's brother, have earlier been killed by the sword (Acts 12:2).

Over time martyrdom came to carry an additional significance. By the end of the first century *martys* referred to the one who gave his or her life for their faith in Christ. While it is true that the act of being a witness was still involved, the idea had also came to indicate the death of the faithful.

Many of the faithful went to their deaths for the Lord. Paul, as a persecutor, brought "threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1), later admitting that he had consented to the deaths of many (Acts 26:10). During the reign of Nero, the historian Tacitus wrote that the Christian were punished "with the most exquisite tortures, those persons, who hated for their crimes, were commonly called Christians." He wrote of Christians being subjected to horrible deaths: being torn to pieces by dogs, being nailed to crosses, and being set on fire. (Tacitus also wrote that the intensity of Nero's persecution case the populace of Rome to fell a sort of pity for his victims; see Tacitus *Annals* 15.44).

As the persecution of the church intensified so the did the frequency of Christian deaths. Eusebius wrote that toward the end of the first century "many were victims of Domitian's appalling cruelty. At Rome great numbers of men . . . were executed without fair [or reasonable, Gk. eulógos] trial" (*Historia Ecclesiastica* [HE] 17.1) During the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98–117) the number of executions rose, the faithful being executed for simply being Christians. Hegesippus, as recorded by Eusebius (HE 32.1), notes that the persecution of this time was spradocially and in some cities (merikôs kaì katà póleis).

Pliny the younger, governor of Bithynia, wrote Trajan for advice in dealing with these followers of Christ. In his letter he rehearsed his procedure: "I ask then if they are Christians. If they admit it, I repeat the question a second and third time, threatening capital punishment; if they persist I sentence them to death." He also wrote of an "anonymous pamphlet" that was issued with the name of Christians in the region. Bringing them to trial he discharged those who denied their Christianity...and especially because they cursed Christ, a thing which, it is said, genuine Christians cannot be induced to do."

It was during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161–180) that perhaps one of the more familiar cases of martyrdom occurred: the death of Polycarp. The events recorded by the church in Smyrna speak of Christians who endure severe and hideous beatings "patiently, so that the by-standers had pity and wept." The audience in the stadium, worked into a frenzy, shouted for Polycarp.

When Polycarp entered the stadium, the noise of the audience was so high "that no man's voice could be so much as heard." Told to renounce Christianity, Polycarp replied: "Fourscore and six years have I been his servant, and he has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my king, who saved me?" When commanded once more to renounce his faith, Polycarp stated: "If you suppose vainly that I will swear by the genius of Caesar, as you say, and acts as if you are ignorant of who I am, hear plainly, I am a Christian. But, if you will learn the doctrine of Christianity, assign a day and give me a hearing." Soon after Polycarp died by fire.

The third century saw the continued persecution of the Church and many Christians died for their faith. During the reigns of Septimus Severus (193–211) and Decius (249–251) conversion to Christianity was considered a crime and an attempt "to eliminate all Christians who would not give up their faith" commenced. Under Diocletian (284–305), according to Eusebius, places of worship were leveled, copies of Scripture were burned, and many Christians were "given to the flames; some were submerged in the sea; other cheerfully stretched out their necks to the headman's axe; some died under torture; others were starved to death; others again were crucified, some as criminals usually are, some with still greater cruelty, nailed the others way up, head down, and kept alive till they starved to death on the very cross."

There arose, however, among a minority in the early church a desire for martyrdom. Kenneth Scott LaTourette writes that "this was partly because it brought honor from their fellow Christians and was supposed to erase any sins which had been committed. It was also partly because of the devotion of those who where ambitious to share the fate of their Lord."

Splinter groups, mostly ascetic efforts, adopted martyrdom as a part of their doctrine. Marcion (b. A.D. 85) organized his followers into churches that, among other things, prized Martyrdom. The Montantists, a prophetic movement of Montanus of Phrygia in the second century, held martyrdom in high regard. To them, and other like them, martyrdom was a achievement.

Gradually, the experience of martyrdom lost its appeal and took on an aspect of reverence. In the fourth century many buildings were erected near or on the tomb of a martyr. The relics of martyrs soon became something prized and venerated, and their tombs became the focus of annual pilgrimages and they became intermediaries for prayers to God.

Jesus had warned that He was sending His disciples into the world as sheep among the wolves (Matt. 16:10). He warned that as the world persecuted Him, it would persecute them (John 15:20). It was inevitable, therefore, that in their defence of their faith, some would give their lives for the cause of their Lord. Martyrdom in the early church was a testimony to such faith and courage of many who were willing to lay their treasure up in heaven, rather than on the earth.

The concept of Martyrdom changed, however, from an act of spiritual courage to something of reverence and veneration, planting the seeds of doctrines and practices associated with Roman Catholicism, such as sainthood. A theology formed around the concept of martyrdom involving salvation and forgiveness.

In martyrdom is found the testimony of courage and faith, the reaction of some against a world that does not recognize the Lord and the platform upon which further historical and religious events would evolve.❑

Contact Robert Curry at PO Box 728, Duncan, SC 29334.

Christian Martyr or Dead Christian?

By John Promisson

"MARTYR"—A NOUN MEANING one who receives physical or emotional mistreatment. That's it! That's what is happening in my life. I'm a martyr, just like Stephen. I have been displaying the whole truth in this church and what do I get for it? Emotional abuse, that's what! Nobody listens and what's worse, nobody cares.

Ever felt like a martyr? You are a member of a local congregation—have been for twenty years. You know what's best for the church, right? And what have they done? They've voted in that new program the new preacher wants—and he's only been here a year—and you know without a doubt it will not work. In your "martyrdom" you say, "They'll see."

Or maybe you are a martyred elder or deacon, possibly even the preacher, and the program that you just presented that would be the best thing for the church since they padded the pews has just been turned down. In your martyrdom you say to yourself, "I'll go along with the decision, but they are really going to be sorry that we didn't implement my program." Are we really martyred today?

The following is a description of first century "martyred" Christians from of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* (available in several editions): "Now let us comprehend the persecutions raised by the Romans against the Christians in the primitive age of the Church, during the space of three hundred years. Wherein marvelous it is to see and read the numbers of Christian innocents that were tormented and slain. Whose kinds of punishments, although they were divers, yet the manner of constancy in all these martyrs was one. And yet, notwithstanding the sharpness of these so many and sundry torments, and also the like cruelness of the tormentors, such was the number of these constant saints that suffered, or rather such was the power of the Lord in His saints that suffered, or rather such was the power of the Lord in His saints, that, as Jerome saith, 'There is no day in the whole year unto which the number of five thousand martyrs cannot be ascribed, except only the first day of January.'

"The first of these ten persecutions was stirred up by Nero about the year of our Lord threescore and four. The tyrannous rage of which emperor was very fierce against the Christians, 'insomuch that (as Eusebius recordeth) a man might then see cities full of men's bodies, the old there lying together with the young, and the dead bodies of women cast out naked, without all reverence of that sex, in the open streets.' Many there were of the Christians in those days, who, seeing the filthy abominations and intolerable cruelty of Nero, thought that he was Antichrist."

Of the Apostles who were of the Twelve, including Matthias, Judas' replacement, it is accepted that all died in martyrdom except Judas, who committed suicide and John who died of natural causes. It is believed that Paul was beheaded on the same day that Peter was crucified upside down on a cross.

It doesn't take long to see that the modern idea of martyrdom is different from that experienced by first-century Christians. Our English-dictionary-definition seems superficial in light of what happened to those early Christians. So often our main emphasis on martyrdom rests on our uncomfortable emotional states. Early historians placed the emphasis on the death of the Christian as a result of his faithfulness.

Scripture uses the word rarely. The KJV uses the word "martyr" only twice. Acts 22:20 refers to Stephen's stoning. Revelation 2:13 refers to the death of Antipas in the church in Pergamum. The KJV also uses a plural "martyrs" in Revelation 17:6, referring to John's vision of a woman drunken with "the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." The NIV uses the word only in reference to Stephen's stoning in Acts 22:20.

We know these people were followers of Christ. They were often called disciples. In the sense that we are followers of Christ, we are also His disciples. Discipleship involves following. But following Christ is quite different than following just anyone. Following Christ in the early church meant facing the same dangers Christ faced.

Stephen was obviously a disciple of Christ. Imagine the honor and privilege of being chosen by the church in Jerusalem to perform some special service for the widows of the community. When Stephen and the other six men did their job, the bickering stopped. Even more exciting, perhaps, the church flourished. The early Christians felt the flush of excitement on their cheeks at the possibility their efforts were instrumental in the rapid growth going on. Was it that excitement that led Stephen to be successful in his own evangelistic efforts? Yet, Scripture almost immediately describes Stephen's trial and subsequent death. As the mob began to pelt him with rocks, Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, hardly noticed, because he had his eyes on Christ. Wow! What a follower.

Paul, who formerly applauded Stephen's death, exhibited later in his life some of the same characteristics of Stephen. He wrote, "Since God has so generously let us in on what he is doing, we're not about to throw up our hands and walk off the job just because we run into occasional hard times. We refuse to wear masks and play games. We don't maneuver and manipulate behind the scenes.... Rather, we keep everything we do and say out in the open, the whole truth on display..." (2 Cor. 4:1, 2, *The Message, The New Testament in Contemporary Language).* That is exactly what Stephen did, he put the whole truth on display to the very end.

Stephen was truly martyred—not because he died, but because he lived for Christ. It was his lifestyle—everyday. Being a martyr in the true sense of the word in the first century or in the twentieth century is not death itself, but the faithfulness that leads to it. The direction (or witness) of Stephen's life led to his death. Perhaps one could say that there were Christians in that first-century massacre who where actually martyred, not because they died for Christ, but because they lived for Him. Could we be martyred today? Sure, not because of emotional or even physical abuse, but because we live for Him. Will you be a martyred Christian, or simply a dead one?❑

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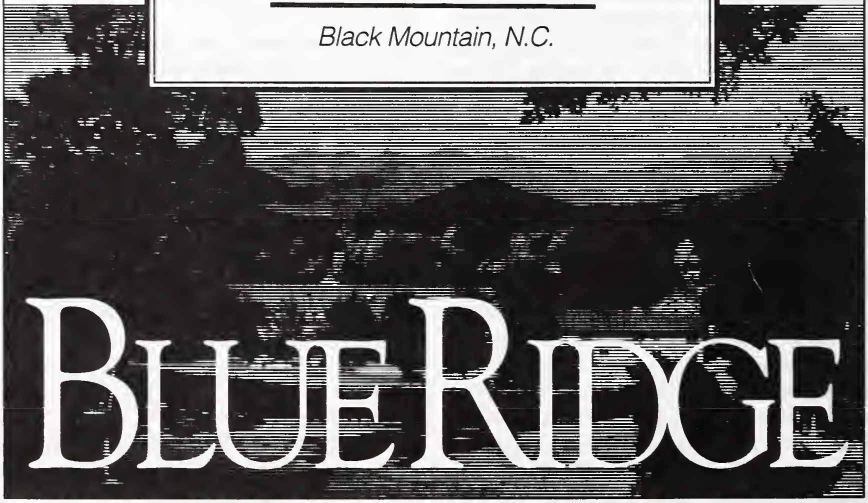

Carolina Christian magazine • 1995 Blue Ridge Encampment
February, March, April 1995

Forgiveness: Finding Freedom from a Failed Marriage

By Pat Daggett

ACCORDING TO THE MOST RECENT published statistics, for every 100 marriages in North Carolina, there are 69 divorces. The fact that many of these divorces involve Christians is a painful reminder of the fact that we are, after all, only human and that in spite of our best efforts, sometimes life just doesn't work out the way we had planned. Living through the failure of a marriage is not only emotionally painful but can also retard any kind of positive emotional or spiritual growth, often for long periods of time. In one study which followed the lives of adults and children affected by divorce for a period of 10 years after the initial failure of the marriage, the researchers were surprised by the large number of people who were unable to move beyond their initial anger or grief and who continued to exhibit resentment and hostility toward their former partners even years later. It is very easy to get "stuck" in such a mindset of anger and resentment. Without deliberate steps to overcome these intense negative feelings, it becomes extremely difficult to find any joy in daily life. Fortunately, for Christians there is a clear prescription for healing these hurts and moving forward with our lives: forgiveness.

In simplest terms, forgiveness means to stop feeling resentment toward someone who has hurt you. Unfortunately, forgiveness is not nearly so simple to achieve. The failure of a marriage and the accompanying deep sense of betrayal by one who had promised a life-long commitment generate a set of strong feelings which often manifest themselves in unhealthy ways. Once a person deals with their grief, the next step in the recovery process is to feel anger. A person may want to lash out, to hurt back, to punish a former spouse and blame them for all the unhappiness in his/her life. Paul's admonition to the Ephesians speaks directly to us in this situation: "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Eph. 4:31–32). And yet this advice is often frustrating when coupled with the words of Jesus (Matt. 11:25–26) which tie our own personal salvation to our ability to forgive someone who, in our pain and anger, we find almost impossible to forgive. It becomes extremely difficult to comprehend how we can possibly be required to forgive.

In order to move beyond this roadblock, it is important to understand what forgiveness is—and what it is not. Because of the way in which forgiveness is often presented in the Scriptures, i.e., as an act which follows the repentance and confession of the one who has offended you in some way (Luke 17:4), it is easy to arrive at the conclusion that we are commanded to forgive in order to relieve the emotional pain of the other person. This is particularly difficult in the aftermath of a divorce. Frequently the partners have no desire or tolerance for contact with each other. One of the partners may be involved in another relationship so that the whole idea of forgiveness as a first step toward reconciliation is not even a possibility.

I believe Christ's commandment to forgive is intended equally for the benefit of the one who is doing the forgiving, not just for the benefit of the offending party. A heart that is filled with anger and bitterness has no room for joy or love or for any of the virtues that we associate with a Christ-like spirit (Col. 3:12–13). In their book Forgiveness, Sidney and Suzanne Simon assert that forgiveness if not only a moral obligation but is also a moral right: it enables us to stop being hurt by things that happened to us in the past. The motivation for a divorced Christian to forgive is no different from that of any Christian: to remove any obstacles that stand in the way of our living as Christ would have us live, freeing us from our emotional pain and allowing us to get on with our lives of service to God.

Forgiveness means letting go of the anger and resentment (and yes, sometimes even the hate) that we feel toward someone who has hurt us. It is not a clear-cut, one-time decision but is instead an ongoing process that must occur over a period of time. For those divorced, it means no longer wanting to punish the former spouse who has hurt us—and accepting the reality that nothing we do to punish an ex-spouse will help us recover from our own personal sense of failure. Being able to forgive means recognizing our own self-worth again. This recognition frees up our emotional energy for positive purposes, allowing us to open our hearts again and draw closer to God.

Forgiving someone does not mean, however, that we forget. In his book *Forgive and Forget*, Lewis Smedes introduces the concept of redemptive remembering. By this he means remembering the hurt and the pain but from the perspective of having moved beyond it to a better state. For example, a woman who stayed home to raise a family may suddenly find herself abandoned by her husband and forced to get a job in order to have basic necessities for herself and her children. By meeting this challenge, she will ultimately find in herself unanticipated strengths. She may also develop other relationships (for example, learning to rely more on her fellow Christians) that would not have developed otherwise. In counseling with divorced people who have participated in the divorce recovery outreach ministry sponsored by the Cole Mill Road congregation, a common refrain we hear is "If I hadn't been through a divorce, I wouldn't be the (stronger) person I am today." These people are able to "remember redemptively"; they haven't forgotten their pain; but they do realize that as a result of dealing with that pain, they have gained something important too.

Forgiving also does not mean that we condone or excuse what others have done. Being willing to forgive a former spouse who may have been abusive is not the same as saying that it is OK for people to do hurtful things. Nor does a willingness to forgive mean that we absolve others from being responsible for their actions. Forgiving a spouse does not mean that they are "off the hook" for their responsibilities in the financial and emotional support of their children.

Unlike some situations, the failure of a marriage affects more than just the two people involved and often leads to difficulties in other relationships. Practicing forgiveness after divorce therefore often involves more than forgiving our ex-spouse. Often we are hurt by family members and friends who may have taken sides and broken off their relationships with us too. And sadly, we can even be hurt by fellow Christians who may have judged us instead of providing the support so desperately needed in the first few months after a marriage breaks up. We can feel resentment or jealousy toward people we know whose marriages are still intact. And for those with children, there is often anger at the inevitable questioning of their abilities as a single parent. Blaming any behavioral or emotional problems children might have on the Christian parent struggling to raise them alone is patently unfair and deeply hurtful.

But of all the people and situations which warrant forgiveness following the breakup of a marriage, the one person we most often find hardest to forgive is our own self. The sense of personal failure that accompanies a failed marriage is intense and overwhelming, particularly for the Christian. In spite of Christ's promise to the divorced Samaritan woman at the well (John 3:1–42), divorce for a Christian often feels like an unpardonable sin. Most of us know that regardless of the circumstances which led to a divorce, we are not completely innocent. The first step for the Christian is to acknowledge and repent of any of their own actions which may have contributed to the marriage breakup and to ask God's forgiveness. But because divorce is so devastating, and because we are faced with the consequences of every day, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that God has forgiven us. Instead we choose instead to continue to punish ourselves.

When we begin to forgive others, we find that the benefits of forgiveness reach beyond our immediate personal situation. This is very important where children are involved. In over half of the divorces in North Carolina, there are children under the age of 18 at home. Divorce is especially traumatic for these younger children. Too often, when a marriage fails, children become pawns and vehicles through which the ex-parents punish each other. It is not unusual for the parent with custody of the children to punish the other parent by denying visitation or

Continued on page 19

Forgiveness and Freedom from Dysfunctional Families

By Mike Loeffler

I HAVE A FRIEND NAMED MARY. Mary is about thirty years old and is a committed and faithful Christian. She has always had what I perceived to be a difficult relationship with her mother. Through the years, especially in Mary's childhood, her mother has been rejecting and at times emotionally abusive. Mary has tried on numerous occasions to establish a positive relationship with her.

Mary's mother is quite attractive and looks young for her age. As her mother has grown older she has become very concerned about her looks and how old her friends view her. One day while Mary and her mother were shopping, one of her mothers friends approached them. To Mary, her mother seemed very uncomfortable in this situation. As the friend said hello her mother proceeded to introduce Mary as a friend of hers rather than her daughter. Feeling again rejected by her mother, she later learned that her mother was embarrassed to have a child as old as Mary, and was concerned that her friend would now know how old she really was.

Mary is a member of a dysfunctional family. Depending on the individual, there are a number of thoughts that come to mind when the term dysfunctional family is used. There are degrees of dysfunction that occur within a family, from extremes of physical or sexual abuse to less traumatic situations. However, no matter what the degree, the impact of these emotionally scarring events and strained relations can have long-term consequences. Christians who arrive at adulthood after having an unhealthy family situation often struggle with the emotional impact of their childhood experiences and their desire as Christians to "let go," forgive their family members, and move on with their lives. This is much easier said than done.

Throughout our lives we retain a fundamental need to feel accepted, secure, and loved. This need often remains unfulfilled in a dysfunctional family. Unhealthy family situations can take many forms but at the core is an established pattern of interaction which is characterized by conditional and inconsistent expressions of love and affection, emotional neglect and abandonment, verbal abuse and shaming, and, in severe cases, physical or sexual abuse.

Having been exposed to situations in which our sense of survival and security are threatened we react by building a storehouse of unexpressed anger and resentment. Unfortunately these feelings cannot be tucked away and forgotten. As we encounter stressors and conflicts in our new relationships, the hidden memories may surface and interfere with our ability to develop and maintain these relationships. In addition we may experience symptoms of stress and depression. These cumulative effects lead to a build up of anger and resentment unless the situation is effectively resolved. As the Bible points out, being unable to release anger can have a negative impact on our emotional and spiritual health. Paul advises to "get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger..." (Eph. 4:31).

Our challenge as Christians becomes one of dealing with these painful memories, freeing ourselves through forgiveness, and preparing expectations for continued relationships with our families. As with all challenges we face as Christians, the challenge to forgive can best be met through persistent prayer for Gods help in the process. In the eighteenth chapter of Luke, Jesus relates the parable of the persistent widow as a way of teaching his disciples to "always pray and not lose heart". If we are able to train ourselves to focus on specific tasks of forgiveness daily and seek wisdom and strength in our prayers, our effort will be more focused and consistent. For example, Mary must focus specifically upon forgiving her mother of the vanity which led the mother to deny that Mary was her daughter.

The next step in forgiveness is addressing our feelings through dealing with specific memories of how we were hurt. This can be accomplished in a number of ways but perhaps is best done initially by making a list of your resentments. We may be hesitant to actually put down on paper painful events and express how these events hurt us. As Christians, we are sometimes reluctant to acknowledge the presence of strong emotions because such feelings somehow imply lack of self control. It is important to remember, however, that God created us with these emotions and expects them to be experienced. It is how they are dealt with that becomes the core issue. For Mary, the incident I described may very well be part of her list. The list that we compile may become quite lengthy. The purpose is not to punish ourselves or our family but rather to allow us to re-experience emotions and feelings that were suppressed or that we lacked the emotional maturity and assertiveness to express at the time. The exercise is designed to bring up these memories in order to effectively resolve the hurt.

After a list is made, take each memory and visualize not only the situation occurring but also visualize yourself responding to a parent with your feelings; anger, sadness, rage, abandonment, etc. While doing this, also visualize your parent listening to your response and acknowledging and accepting your feelings. Regardless of how a parent might respond in reality (and you may never actually know how a parent would respond for you may not choose to confront a parent) it is important to picture a hearing of how you felt when these events occurred.

Proverbs 17:17 says, "A friend loves as all times, and a brother is born for adversity." In the next stage it is important to enlist the help of a brother or sister in Christ. This person perhaps a spouse, a close friend, or minister will serve as our listener. It is his or her job to listen to our list and accompanying feelings. He or she is there to acknowledge our feelings as understandable, normal, and acceptable, not to provide any judgments on us or our family.

If available to us, we now have the opportunity to address our feelings with our families face to face. We must do this remembering that our forgiveness comes out of our love for God and desire to do his will. It also comes out of our love for our family and desire to let go of resentment. We accomplish this task not by going back to our list and addressing each incident. Instead we provide a general statement which informs them of our pain, forgives them for their part in that pain, and expresses a desire to move forward to a more positive and loving relationship. In doing this we must fully prepare ourselves for the reaction to our statement.

For example, it would be unrealistic to expect the family member to fully acknowledge their blame and beg our forgiveness in a tearful resolution to years of emotional pain. More realistically, we might receive a meager attempt at an apology and a continued pattern of behavior as before. They were often victims of the same type of emotional neglect and hurt as we experienced. Their pain may be so great and their ability to handle even our efforts of forgiveness may at times be so limited that we choose either to say very little to them or even nothing at all. When deciding what to say and when to say it, our friends can be most helpful.

No one arrives at parenting being fully equipped to handle the task. The emotionally unhealthy behavior to which you were exposed may be the product of your parents exposure to the same type of upbringing or worse. With forgiveness comes acceptance. To some degree it must be your acceptance of your parents or family as they are, and as products of what they may have been exposed to as children.

After this step your prayers must continue. Expectations should be kept low because your family may continue to act in hurtful ways. As this occurs it may be best to distance yourself to preserve your emotional health and to continue to adopt a new style geared toward breaking the cycle of resentment.

All of the tasks outlined above are not easily accomplished. The depth of emotional pain may at times be overwhelming. Calling upon the help of a counseling professional or mature, loving friend may be a necessary step in accomplishing what you have set out to do. We all need the assurance of an unconditional love to have the confidence to manage life's pains. As you continue your Christian walk, keep in mind that Jesus is walking with you to help you face this challenge of forgiving members of a dysfunctional family.❑

Mike, a psychologist at Holly Hill Hospital in Raleigh, is a member of the Brooks Avenue church. Contact him at 700 Brooks Avenue, Raleigh, NC 27607.

Forgiving: An Opportunity for Joy and Hope

By Jami Mahler

I STILL WAKE WITH A START SOMEtimes—with held breath—living again the oppressive weight and hideous actions of an abuser. In that instant I am once again in a hellish prison of silence, lies, ugliness, and shame. But, then, as my eyes widen against the darkness, all the terror is replaced with joy—a liberating, irrepressible joy.

It is over. It is really over.

We live in an alarming, often depressively overwhelming world. Injustice seems to rule the day. Innocents are the common casualties, and there seems to be an incessant, insatiable stream of victims.

Yet for us, the forgiven, there is infinite hope. And for us, the forgivers, there is unbounded joy.

I believe that many people have survived terrible cruelties at the hands of another—often another who was trusted. But allowing that pain to shape thoughts, actions, and reactions is not the way to overcome the injustice. Life is more than merely surviving, and all the while carrying around bitterness, fear, anger, frustration and sadness and just making it in spite of all that has happened. That type of living is a continuation of the injustice because it robs you of the ability to be free, to be open. It is easier to remain a victim, to let fear control your life, and to hold on to hurts driven deep in your soul. Easier, not better.

There is a life filled with unquenchable joy no matter what your particular horror, but it requires a soul-searching, soul-rending act: forgiveness.

Forgiveness is literally a leap of faith. It is putting yourself in the hands of God precisely when you question how He could let something so terrible happen to you. It is trusting God most faithfully when your sense of what is just and right is overshadowed by what He demands to be just and right. Forgiveness is not cowering before evil, or blindly accepting what has happened to you. It is intentionally accepting the responsibility and the challenge to act on Gods terms in the face of evil.

And what are Gods terms? What does the Lord really require? The answer to that question is found in the latter part Micah 6:8, "... To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." This succinct answer, when applied fully, is indeed a key to abundant life far beyond survival.

To act justly...

There are no qualifiers here, no exceptions based on what has been done to you. Acting justly is a way of living in response to good or evil, grave injustice or petty frustration. It does not mean enabling someone to be free to hurt others or accepting everything terrible as Gods will. To act justly is to act—not react. It is to choose in word and deed to not retaliate, but to follow only just, correct, and honorable motives. It means working with our social and legal systems to protect others and advocating peacefully for change when necessary. It does not allow us to use a weakness in the system to get revenge; nor does it allow us to back away from our obligation to do what we can, especially if we have suffered. To act justly requires immense, constant self-examination and respect for ourself and our faith. It requires that we accept full responsibility for who we are in all circumstances.

To love mercy...

Loving mercy requires even greater strength of character, but I believe that it comes only through tested commitment to acting justly. Mercy, defined as "compassionate treatment of an offender or enemy," compels us to

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treat the very one who has hurt us with all the respect, kindness, and understanding that we wanted while he or she was causing us pain. When you have suffered, there is pain and sadness; there is also an incredible anger that threatens to consume you, an anger so overwhelming that it has a terror all its own. That anger is your own cry that you did not deserve what happened, that you have lost a part of yourself in some way that can never be completely set right. Anger feeds on this notion of what is deserved—what you didn't deserve, what your offender does deserve—and, eventually, that is all that is left of you: rage, revenge, hatred, bitterness, and an empty life. Mercy quenches the anger by removing the fuel.

But this injunction is not merely to show but to love mercy. You must go against your basic instincts and show compassion to one who has hurt you; and, furthermore, you must learn to love the opportunity to show mercy. Mercy requires an offender and one offended. The offense itself is seemingly irrelevant—again there are no disclaimers, no levels of offense to be handled differently. And again, the responsibility is on the offended—the only one who can offer mercy, the only one who is truly free to let go. And this leads to the last requirement.

To walk humbly with your God. . .

I don't believe that God considers it a sin to question why terrible things happen. I think He even understands when we are angry with Him. But I think He expects us, amid all our questioning and all our anger, to confide in, rely on, and comply with His ultimate wisdom. He demands justice from us, and we must trust that He controls the ultimate administration of justice. He demands that we love mercy, and we must know that He shows us great mercy in immense generosity. We must accept that He will treat each person—even one who has committed a terrible offense—with that same lovingkindness. He demands humility, and we must imitate the humility of His Son who gave Himself up to injustice and cruelty to secure salvation. We walk with a God who has suffered and is offended by sin and hate. We walk with a God who can teach the rich blessings of acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly. These elements give birth to forgiveness.

For Subscription Information, contact:
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Conclusion

Forgiveness is the only way we can truly experience the highest emotions. To have never forgiven is to have never experienced love in its truest, purest form. And to have never experienced this kind of love is to have never really known joy—the joy that abounds and gives us the wings and the power to break free of oppression. To have never known joy is to have never felt peace.

In facing my own "demons" and struggling with my own reluctance to forgive, I have been blessed with a growing reliance on God. I have been forced to look at my own dark side, to confront my own weakness, and to experience His strength. I grapple with difficult questions that shake the core of who and what I am. "If my abuser came forward in a service today to be baptized, could I rejoice?" "Would I really want God to offer my abuser the same heaven I seek?" "Do we both deserve the same reward?" And sometimes I still find myself questioning, "Why me?" even though I have also come to realize that perhaps a better question is, "Why should it not have happened to me?"

I have concluded that I must use my experience to comfort others who have suffered—to act justly. I have come to realize that the mercy granted to me by my God is very precious and cost Him a great deal; it is not my place to desire that anyone not be granted that same mercy. I have come to love mercy. I have to walk humbly with my God minute to minute because He holds the ultimate answers to all questions—many of which can never fully be understood in this lifetime.

Facing the struggle of forgiving has been painful. But out of that pain, I have found a joy that I think few people ever fathom. That joy can be yours.❑

Jami, a journalist, missionary to Kiev, serves as administrative assistant for the Brooks Avenue church. Contact her at 700 Brooks Avenue, Raleigh, NC 27607.

Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

STATESVILLE, NC...The Northview church has taken the oversight of the mission work of John Reilly as he labors in Irkutsk, Siberia. The work in Irkutsk first began in the fall of 1992 with a campaign conducted by the North Atlanta church. John remained and worked with the new Christians in several cities in Siberia. Since last summer John has been working under the oversight of the Northview congregation. If you would like more information or would like to offer your support, contact the Northview church at 704/873-9779. SEARCY, AR...Harding University announces the dedication of the Jim Bill McInteer Bible Center on October 29, 1994 with more than 2,000 people in attendance. The center houses faculty offices, classroom seating for nearly 1,200 students, the Center for Church Growth, the Harding School of Biblical Studies, the Office of Church Relations, a missions research and teaching area. EDMOND, OK...Believing that evangelism is the life of the church, the "In Search of the Lord's Way" radio and television broadcasts may be heard in both Carolinas. The television broadcasts may be heard in Apex, NC; Lenoir, NC; and Greenville, SC. If you are interested in bringing this program into your area, contact the Edmond Church of Christ at PO Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083. FLORENCE, AL...Charles Coil, founding president and chancellor of International Bible College, died at his home on December 1, following a lengthy illness. He served as president of IBC from 1971 until 1990 while continuing his evangelistic work. From 1990 he served the college as its chancellor.❑

Send news to Michael R. Mobley, Post Office Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115-0312.

Continued from page 14

by making derogatory comments about the absent parent in front of the children. Or the noncustodial parent will withhold child support in an attempt to get back at the former spouse. Children are often victims, caught in the middle, wanting to love both parents but made to feel as if they must choose one over the other. When the Christian parent is able to forgive and let go of the anger and resentment he/she feels, it frees not only the parent, but also the children. This allows children to choose freely whether or not to re-establish relationships, not only with their other parent, but also with the grandparents and other members of their extended family. It is also important to understand that children of divorce have their own pain. They are often angry and resentful of both parents. We have an obligation to teach our children about forgiveness and to guide them through the process so that they too can move forward with their lives in a positive way.

The failure of a marriage can be devastating. But it is not a tragedy. The tragedy comes when we let an unforgiving spirit mire us down in resentment and hurts of the past, thus failing to realize our full potential as Christians. We can't go back and undo the past—our only real choice is to learn to forgive. We must accept God's grace and forgive ourselves. We must accept God's commandment to forgive those who broke their promises to us—whether they ask for our forgiveness or not. In so doing we will make room in our hearts again for peace and love and yes, even joy; and we will confirm our rightful place in God's family.❑

Pat Daggett works with the Divorce Recovery Ministry of the Cole Mill Road church in Durham, NC. Contact her at 1617 Cole Mill Road, Durham, NC 27705.

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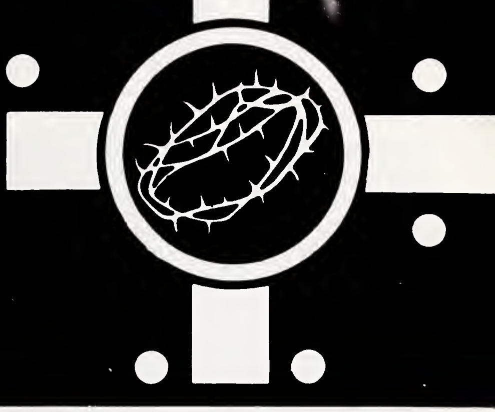
CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL. 37, NO. 3 MARCH 1995



Christians and Culture

Carolina Christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
EDITORIAL & PUBLICATION STAFF
Johnny R. Melton, Editor
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
Jim Mullican, Associate Editor
Michael Mobley, News Editor
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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Road, Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: individual—$8/year ($15/2 years and $22/3 years); club of five or more—$7.50 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles—50¢/copy/month, or church mailing list (minimum 15) 60¢/copy/month.

Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes with Form 3579 to:
Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Address editorial matter to:
Johnny R. Melton
3305 12th Avenue Place, SE
Conover, NC 28613-9609

Address news items to:
Michael Mobley
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Mooresville, NC 28115

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All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 10.

Order from Carolina Christian Bookstore, PO Box 1219, Yadkinville, NC 27055 (1-800-343-1081, Monday—Friday, 9:00—6:00).

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

WHEN IS THE LAST TIME YOU WITnessed a baptism in a morning assembly? I confess that it has been quite some time for me. In my limited observation, I believe that there is a decided trend away from public baptisms. The majority of baptisms, in my recent experience, take place in private. And this is not necessarily because the candidate has suddenly been confronted with the gospel and, being convinced of his or her own sinfulness, has requested baptism "without drinking a drop, eating a bite, or sleeping a wink," in keeping with the New Testament examples. Generally, the baptisms are planned and scheduled; they are just planned and scheduled for a time other than the public assembly.

To be sure, the New Testament does not require that baptisms take place in the context of the assembly. In fact, the examples of baptism in Acts suggest that any time of the day or night is suitable for baptism. Further, there is an implied sense of urgency seen in one's immediate submission to baptism whenever one is convinced of the gospel. However, there is no description of baptism in an established church in the New Testament. There is no description of the baptism of one who has grown up in the context of the church. What we know of baptisms in the early church is fairly sketchy. But from such sources as the *Didache*, Pliny's *Letter to Trajan*, and Justin Martyr's *First Apology*, baptisms were community events. The baptisms did not take place in the assemblies because there were no indoor baptisteries; but after a baptism, according to Justin, "We, however, after thus washing the one who has been convinced and signified his assent, lead him to those who are called brethren, where they are assembled. They then earnestly offer common prayers for themselves and the one who has been illuminated (Justin, speaking of baptism, says that "This washing is called illumination...") and all others everywhere, that we may be made worthy, having learned the truth, to be found in deed good citizens and keepers of what is commanded, so that we may be saved with eternal salvation. On finishing the prayers we greet each other with a kiss."

I believe that there are at least three factors at work that have influenced us away from baptisms in our assemblies. The first factor is the heightened focus on the individual: the "Have-it-your-way"-syndrome. It is unlikely that people today are any more shy or self-conscious than any previous generation. However, people today are provided with individualized accommodations in more circumstances and more readily than at any other time. Consequently, many baptisms take place privately with only family or a few friends being present (or, at times, no one at all but the candidate and the administrator). While such baptisms are scriptural, and much to be preferred over no baptisms at all, they do not involve the church directly and, as a result, the experience is diminished for the church as well as the new Christian.

The second factor in the decline in public baptisms is the self-conscious aim of many churches to begin on time and to stop on time, keeping the service to an hour in length. Most people are considerate of the wishes of others (especially, when doing so provides them with the opportunity to put off doing something that is difficult). When the worst thing that can happen is for the service to run over 15 or 20 minutes (and people can tell if overtime is resented regardless of what is actually said about it) it is easy to rationalize that to respond for baptism or restoration would irritate people, so even though one may be inclined to do so, the inclination is squelched, for a more "convenient season." (This inclination is the result of one's conscience being pricked by the gospel. To refuse to respond for whatever reason or excuse, over time, can result in the hardening of the conscience.) Those who lead services and those who attend must learn to welcome overtime services. To do otherwise smothers the life from our services, and discourages genuine participation where one may respond without fear of reprisals.

A third factor contributing to the decline in the frequency of public baptisms is the discontinuation of annual revival services. With the advent of located preachers in nearly every church, the annual gospel meeting where many children and spouses were baptized has fallen on hard times. At first, the baptisms that took place during the revivals were spread throughout the year. Most of the preaching done on Sundays, at the time the number of gospel meetings began to decline, was first-principle in character, providing strong motivation for obeying the gospel. However, over time the tendency to preach first principles to the church on a regular basis declined. As a result, some churches have developed more mature Christians, having moved on past the ABC's; but, at the same time, there are fewer opportunities for the lost in our assemblies to be exhorted to obey the gospel.

I want to plead for baptisms to be returned to the assembly—to the community life of the body. I want to plead for longer services. The goal of keeping the service to an hour is unrealistic and smacks of the perfunctory: "we are here to do what God ordained—sing, pray, preach, give, and eat the Lord's Supper—and as long as we do each item, we are covered and God is happy." However, if we plan for a longer service—adding in time to handle responses (and using that time for singing and praying should there be no responses)—we will be giving people permission to do what the gospel compels and the preacher exhorts them to do. Furthermore, we may actually find ourselves worshipping God, instead of our schedules.

In Tribute

In this issue we pay tribute to Cliff Walter. Cliff served as an elder for the church in Hickory, NC for a number of years. Prior to moving to Hickory, he and his family lived in Wilkesboro, where he played an important role in the life of the church in that city. Cliff died on November 30, 1994 after a brief illness that had been preceeded by a period of declining health.

Cliff was an elder in the Hickory church when I moved from Statesville to preach for the church. Cliff impressed me as an elder with a true shepherd's heart. He was a "people person" much more than a "decision maker." I appreciated that quality in him.

I will remember Cliff for his love of music. He enjoyed music of all descriptions, but he loved to sing hymns. He was a capable song leader, but I loved to hear him sing tenor. With his death, heaven's choir has gained another melodious voice.

Cliff not only loved to worship, but he also was determined to share the gospel and the church with his friends and neighbors. Among those to whom he introduced the concept of New Testament Christianity, were the Pharrs of Wikesboro. Beginning with the mother, Lorrena, Cliff instructed the Pharr family in the truths of the gospel. Among the children who obeyed the gospel as a result of his patient teaching were Claude and David Pharr, both of whom have devoted their lives to preaching the gospel. (Claude now serves the South Fork church in Winston-Salem, NC and David, known to most of our readers for his work as editor of ***Carolina Christian***, is Director of East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions.)

In his remarks at Cliff's funeral, Claude spoke of Cliff's love of singing and the fact that he had been responsible for introducing his family to New Testament Christianity. He then spoke of Cliff as "a dominant influence in my life." He elaborated, "Why am I a gospel preacher today? Cliff's influence on my young life was one of the major reasons. Paul wrote to Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). I could almost hear Cliff saying those words to me. Cliff did not disappoint me. Sometimes our childhood heroes do by a defection from the truth or moral blemish. Not so, Cliff. I am thankful that the man I saw and admired through boyhood eyes remained sound in the faith and upright in character. No disillusionment here."

David observed, "I sometimes preach a sermon which I begin by asking people to consider the most important thing that ever happened in their lives. I mention some of the really important events in my own life, such as graduations, marriage, birth of children, etc. Then I say, 'The single most important event ever in my life was a cold Sunday afternoon when Cliff Walter took me into the water of a place called "Noah's Hole" in Wilkes County, NC, and baptized me into Christ.' I don't know at how many places and how many times I have said these words, but Cliff has been named in many, many places as the one who baptized me.

"Whatever good I have been able to do, much of the credit goes to Cliff. We cannot imagine what life might have been if he had not come into our lives. He was a good man, a Christian man, and we loved him dearly."

On page 17 we have included a poem Cliff wrote for his family and read to them when they gathered to celebrate his seventy-sixth birthday. We also have included a tribute to Cliff written by one of his grandsons and delivered as a eulogy at his funeral.

We mourn with his family in his death, but we rejoice with him and with them in our confidence that being absent from the body, he is present with the Lord.❑

Guest Editorial

Christians and Culture

By Ron Newberry

FROM THE INSTANT THE CHURCH was born in Acts 2, there has been a clash between the value system of our king and the value (or non-value) system of the world. Frequently, it is not a matter of moral versus immoral; it is also moral versus amoral. However, regardless of whether it is a battle against an immoral or an amoral culture, the fact remains there is a contest for the hearts of men in culture.

Paul makes it perfectly clear in 1 Corinthians 5:9ff that Christians should not associate with sexually immoral people. However, he points out that he does not mean the sexually immoral people in the world. If that were the case, we would have to leave this world. Therefore, he recognizes the necessity of interacting with our culture. The question is, how do we live in this culture without becoming contaminated by it?

Over the two millennia the church has existed, various answers have been proposed to that basic question. It has been suggested, and even implemented by some conscientious people who would follow God, that we should extricate ourselves from culture to the extent that we become an isolated community. On the other end of the spectrum are those who believe that the impact of culture cannot be avoided and, therefore, we should fully embrace it so we can minister to the lost. Most every other recommendation falls somewhere between those two extremes.

It is not an unimportant concern, especially as we train our youth. How should we live in this world so that we remain in the world but not be like the world? The answers many of us received as we grew up (and continue to receive from many sources today) involved a considerable list of behaviors from which we were to abstain. Little attention was given to what we *should do* or *should be*. Faithfulness was defined almost entirely by what we did not do rather than by what we were to become.

In his second letter, the apostle Peter rehearses the events as they will unfold in the last days leading up to the second coming of the Lord. This earth and everything in it will be destroyed down to the very elements. In reflecting on such destruction, Peter asks a question about the kind of people we ought to be (2 Pet. 3:11). His answer is not couched in negative language filled with a list of "thou shalt nots." He calls Christians to live holy and godly lives. While that implies some attitudes and behaviors that should be avoided, the answer is framed by positive attitudes and behaviors.

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Indeed, how then should we live? What kind of people ought we to be? This issue of ***Carolina Christian*** is devoted to answering to some degree this central question of how do Christians live in this culture without becoming contaminated by it. Pure religion, James says, which God our Father accepts as pure and faultless involves keeping oneself from being polluted by the world (James 1:27).

This month's issue will focus on some of the texts in Peter's writings and Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Those who have graciously agreed to write articles on this theme were asked to draw from the assigned text wisdom from God which would help us to live in this culture while remaining true to our calling to be God's men and women, holy and godly in this world. It is my hope that readers immerse themselves in these articles and that they become more resolute in their commitment to be those called out of the world. Determine that you will not devote your life to just being against evil, but you will be for holiness. (Pharisees in the first century make it clear that the outside can be clean without that reality having any appreciable impact on the inside.) Prepare yourself through study and practice of the Word to be sent back into the world to become all things to all men—without compromising holiness—so that by all possible means you might win some and save you own soul.❑

Ron Newberry has served the Friendly Avenue church in Greensboro for ten years. He is a member of the Board of Directors of Carolina Christian Publications, Inc. Contact him at 5101 W Friendly Avenue, Greensboro, NC 27410.

Christians and Culture

Live as Strangers

By Amos Allen

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, WHILE STILL a teenager, I visited some people I did not know. I washed my hands in the bathroom, and then looked for a towel with which to dry them. There were lots of towels, but each one was neatly folded with its logo or embroidery perfectly centered. My mother never decorated a bathroom that way. I did not know which towel was to be used, or how to re-fold them, so I dried my hands on my pants. I was embarrassed.

Few people enjoy being unfamiliar with a situation or custom. We like to know the people around us and what we can expect from them. Familiarity insures comfort.

Peter wrote a letter to some Christians about the possibility of being physically persecuted because they believed Jesus. For most of his life he had been aware of what the Roman authorities could do to people. Earlier in his life he, along with some others, had personally faced some soldiers. Peter's words to these Christians are based on experiences with Rome and with the Son of God.

In 1 Peter 1:17–21, we see the Christians being reminded that their Father is an impartial judge, and that they were rescued and given hope by means of an expensive gift. In other words, their relationship with God is not to be inconsequential.

Verse seventeen instructs: “live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear (NIV).” But we all realize that being a stranger is no fun! Nobody wants to feel “out of place.” Sticking out like a sore thumb is not often considered to be a virtue or an enviable position. If you are being hunted by the army, you certainly do not want to draw attention to yourself by being different. And yet, that is Peter's message.

He knew the temptations that come with trying to blend in order to escape trouble. He understood the desire to protect one's self and the pain it brings. These people are no longer to be like those around them. They now have a Father and a Savior who have changed them. They are able to see what is real and lasting. Peter encourages them to live differently from others.

It hurts to be tortured. It hurts to be ridiculed and laughed at. It is not fun to have your possessions taken. Prison is not an easy place. Peter knew that, but he urges Christians to think about things that are more important than self-preservation. Things like serving others, resisting sin, being such an example that even your enemies are inspired.

As missionaries in Kenya, we worked very hard at identifying with the local population. We learned their language; we dressed more simply; we ate local fare; we acted like them. We accepted their standards in many ways. We did this to make the message of Christ more accessible to them. Sometimes, though, I did these things just to avoid being considered odd.

The American culture encourages conformity. That is okay most of the time, but there are ways and times we Christians need to be different. I do not believe it will be easy for many of us to consciously choose to "go against the grain." Let's look at some situations that call for radical discipleship.

We give money when we should give time and energy. Am I a banker or a father for my children? The poor need more than $100. God certainly does not need our dollars. He needs us.

The language, the criticism and the harassment that goes on at work is often ungodly. We can't change everybody, but we can be kind, gentle and supportive of the oppressed.

"I don't want to offend someone, or turn them off." None of us does, but following Jesus is supposed to be a joy. Let's stop being afraid that Christianity might not be for them, or that they might not be able to hang in there.

The bathroom towels were strange to me due to my shortcomings. What was unfamiliar and scary to me was normal for those who had more insight and training. Following Jesus might seem to require unusual behavior, but for those who can see, it is the only way to live.☐

Contact Amos at 631 Meadowbrook Road, Asheboro, NC 27203.

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Christians and Culture

Live as Wise Men

By Phil Stapp

IT WAS THE BIGGEST DECISION OF his life. He had one wish. He could wish for anything he wanted. What should he ask for? All the wealth of the world? The most beautiful woman in the world for a wife? Power to rule the world? The death of his enemies? A long life? What would it be? There was only one chance. He had to make the best possible choice. The rest of his life would be affected by this one decision. Finally, he decided. He chose the most valuable thing in the world.

This is not the story of Aladdin and the lamp. This is the true story of Solomon (found in 1 Kings 3 and 2 Chronicles 1). Imagine yourself in his shoes when God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." What an opportunity. He could ask for anything. In the wisest decision of his life, Solomon asked for more wisdom so that he could better serve others.

Paul also understood the connection of wisdom to serving others. That understanding is why he wrote, "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15–16). In his powerful discussion of living together as the family of God (Eph. 4:1–6:9) these verses play a key role. They are closely connected with all of the verses around them. Because to live as children of God is to live wisely in the service of others.

In 5:1–2 Paul writes, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Then in 5:17–21, "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

To live wisely, then, is to imitate God. To imitate God is to serve others. In order to do this we must (1) know what God's will is, (2) be filled with the Spirit, and (3) submit to one another. This is the wise and full life. To be foolish or drunk on wine is to live wastefully or without restraint (the meaning behind debauchery). In such a state we are unable to imitate God. But, to know God's will and be full of the Spirit is to be able to live a life of love and have real reason to sing in joy and praise to one another and to God (as opposed to the foolish and wasteful reasons the world sings).

"...to know God's will and be full of the Spirit is to be able to live a life of love and have real reason to sing in joy and praise to one another and to God"

If we imitate God, know his will, and are filled with the Spirit we will submit to one another. Then all of our relationships will be based on serving others rather than ourselves (5:22–6:9). This is the kind of wisdom that the world will never find on its own and distinguishes God's people from all others. For only by the wisdom of God can we love and serve others.

I do not want this to sound simplistic because it is not. It is never easy to imitate God and live by His wisdom, but it is possible. Solomon gives us the key, a humble heart willing to admit it does not know all the answers. Solomon's father understood. David wrote: "Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.... Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant.... Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him. He will spend his days in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land. The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them" (Ps. 25:4–5, 8–10, 12–14).

One astronomer was asked his opinion of heaven. He responded, "After spending my life pondering the mysteries of existence and the universe, I hope heaven will be a place where I can say, 'Okay, I give up. What was the answer?'" We must not wait until we get to heaven to say "I give up." We must say it now. Then God will reveal His wisdom to us which will enable us to love and serve others.❑

Phil Stapp is preaching minister for the Brewer Road church in Winston-Salem. Contact him at 2010 Brewer Road, Winston-Salem, NC 27127.

Live a Life Worthy of Our Calling

By Peter Rode

IN HIS EPISTLES PAUL WRITES TO christians to encourage them to continue in the faith which they have already exhibited, and explains to them anything lacking, either in their doctrine or their lives, so his call for them to continue in, or to improve their Christian walk is understandable. As he himself stated, "...I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28). From the twin themes of the mystery of God and unity in this epistle, it seems that the purpose of this letter is to show that division of any sort, whether it be between Jew and Gentile, husband and wife, or individual members, is wrong.

Ephesians 4:1 is a pivotal verse in the epistle. It is here that Paul makes the transition from doctrine to exhortation, from theology to pragmatism. It is in this verse where he begins his call for the Ephesians to live in harmony, and unity with each other. As we look at 4:1, "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received," there are three questions that need to be asked, *viz.*, what? why? and how?

What Calling?

What is the calling the Ephesians should live worthy of? Paul exhorts the Philippians to live lives "worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil 1:27). He urges the Colossians to "live a life worthy of the Lord" (Col 1:10), and the Thessalonians are urged to "live lives worthy of God" (1 Thess. 2:12). From these verses it is evident that the calling has a divine source. In this letter it's simply "worthy of the calling you have received" (4:1). With no further explanation we must turn to the context for help.

In 4:4 Paul says, "just as you were called to one hope of you calling," but previously he had stated that the Gentiles were "without hope and without God in the world" (2:12), and so it would seem that this calling would give them hope and God. It was the calling by God to unite them with Christ and include them into His Body (3:6). They have now become part of the holy temple of God in which He lives through the Spirit (2:21,22). It is here where their hope lies because it is only in Christ, and, therefore, in His Body where the blessings of redemption and the forgiveness of sins are found (1:7).

Why Live Worthy Lives?

Why should the Ephesians live worthy of their calling? The word *then* connects what is being urged in this verse with what has gone before. Chapters 1–3 is a doctrinal section in which Paul builds his case for unity and upon which he bases his exhortation for the Christians to live lives worthy of the name Jesus and the calling of hope which they received through the Gospel (1:13; cf. 2 Thess. 2:13,14). God has given every spiritual blessing in Christ to the Christian (1:3–14). Through His power God has made all those who were dead in sin alive in Christ (2:1–10), and has incorporated them into the Body of Christ, which is the Church. Here all mankind—Jew and Gentile—are reconciled and barriers are broken down (2:14,15). Not only are people reconciled to each other, but they are reconciled to God (2:16). The Gentiles are no longer "separated from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel...without hope and without God in the world" (2:12), but are rather "fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (2:19). This is the beginning of the great mystery of God that has now been revealed—which will be concluded according to God's timetable—and the concept of the Church being the Body conveys the idea that the Church must continue the work of Christ on earth, hence the responsibility laid upon her to make known the manifold wisdom of God (3:10,11). The Church, which they are privileged to be part of, being the representative of Jesus, has to live and act like Christ. They had become part of the holy temple of God in which He lives through His Spirit (2:21,22), and so their lives needed to be conducted appropriately, befitting the holy presence of God (cf.1 Cor. 3:16,17; 6:19,20).

Jesus wants His body to show the world a united front, where brothers and sisters live together in harmony.

How to Live Worthy Lives?

How are they to live lives worthy of the calling? Chapters 4–6 contain the practical matters of how to live lives befitting the call of God. To be living like a child of God, one who had been reconciled to God, it is **imperative** that one lives in unity with others of like faith. Jesus had prayed for unity "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you...that the world may believe that you sent me" (John 17:20,21), and Paul had taught, "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts: and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body...and we were all given the one Spirit to drink" (1 Cor. 12:12,13). So often we teach these verses as a refutation of denominationalism, which is a correct application, but we forget to apply this principle to **internal** unity both in the local and universal sense. Ideally, Jesus wants His body to show the world a united front, where brothers and sisters live together in harmony. Remember the Church is where barriers are not supposed to exist (1 Cor. 2:14; Gal 3:28) and where reconciliation and peace has been made by the sacrifice of Jesus, the Son of God, Himself. The Ephesians were exhorted by Paul to keep united through the bond of peace (4:3). This type of unity where there was a mixing of Jewish and Gentile culture, would not come naturally, so to maintain their unity and to be successful in their Christian life the ethical and moral principles taught in the following verses would be essential, especially those found in verses 2 and 3. Christians would have to develop the various characteristics mentioned such as humility, gentleness, patience, and being able to bear with one another. This unity was to extend not only to the church (vss. 4–16), but also to interpersonal relationships as they no longer lived in darkness as the Gentiles did, but rather as children of light (4:17–5:20). They were to put off the old way of life, and accept the new self created by God. Other, more intimate, relationships would also change. Relationships between husband and wife (5:21–33); between parents and children (6:1–4); and between masters and slaves (6:5–9) all have to be based upon the principle of submission to one another"out of reverence for Christ" (5:21). Finally he tells them, that to be successful in the fight against Satan, they need to arm themselves with God's armor and use the power that He supplies. The fight is not a physical one, but rather a spiritual one (Eph. 6:10–18).

Application

As late twentieth-century Christians these words of Paul apply to us equally as much as they did to the Ephesians in the first century. It seems they learned from, and applied Paul's exhortation, because as we read through 1 and 2 Timothy and Revelation 2:1–7 it can be noted that, although they might have had other problems, they seemed to have maintained their unity. It is our duty as Christians to develop the characteristics of Christ (cf. Gal. 5:21,22; 2 Cor. 3:18) so that we might be more united in our stand against evil. The words of Paul to the Romans are apropos at this point, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.... Live in harmony with one another.... Do not repay anyone evil for evil.... If it is possible, **as far as it depends on you,** live at peace with everyone (Rom 12:10, 16a, 17a, 18; read 9–21; emphasis supplied), however, the Psalmist summed it all up most beautifully when he sang, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! ... For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life evermore" (Ps. 133:1,4).❑

Peter Rode ministers with the Friendly Avenue church in Greensboro. Contact him at 5101 W. Friendly Avenue, Greensboro, NC 27410.

Live as Servants of God

By Rob Albright

THERE IS A GREAT BATTLE GOING ON for our very lives. God wants us on His side and Satan wants us to follow Him. It is up to us to decide who we are going to follow and serve. We are free to make this decision. Peter urges us to "live as servants of God" (1 Pet. 2:16).

Satan is the great deceiver of all ages and the "father of lies" (John 8:44). If we choose to follow him we will live a life filled with unrighteous thoughts and deeds. God wants us to turn away from such a lifestyle and become His servant. God wants us to "live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12–13).

Called to be Different

This means we choose to live differently than those who are controlled by the world and its influences. People who decide to follow God's way will become Christ-like individuals and they will have a different set of values and different practices. Christians live differently because they have been "set free from sin and have become slaves to God" (Rom. 6:22). This passage goes on to tell us that we reap a life that leads to holiness and the result of this type of living is eternal life.

It's a Spiritual Thing

It is not easy. The battle is real. Joe Beam, in his book *Seeing the Unseen* (Howard Publishing Company, 1994, 10–11) says, "The real battle is not against ghosts or demonic possession. It is in ourselves. The primary tool of Satan is not possession, it is deception." We must be careful. Satan wants to deceive us into following him and his evil ways. If he cannot do that, he would be happy keeping us from being a useful servant of God.

Victory is Assured

Peter says to resist Satan, "standing firm in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:9). This is what a servant of God does in this battle. We live in the world, but we are not of the world. John says "Do not love the world or anything in the world...the world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:15–17).

This is how we make a difference in the world. Letting our presence be known (Matt. 5:13–16). Can people see whose servant we are? Living as servants of God means assured victory and living forever with our Heavenly Father (1 John 2:17b; Rom. 6:22b).❑

Rob serves the church in Thomasville. Contact him at RR 4 Box 623, Thomasville, NC 27360.

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Act as Free Men

By Paul E. Jarrett

"ACT AS FREE MEN, AND DO NOT use your freedom as a covering for evil...." (1 Pet. 2:16f).

Americans love freedom. Our patriotic songs abound with references to freedom. We live in "the land of the free." From the moment our forefathers signed the *Declaration of Independence* we have declared "let freedom ring." Our soldiers have died "to make men free."

Freedom Not License

Freedom is a precious thing. But recently freedom has drifted toward license. The difference between the two is significant. Whereas freedom is the exercising of liberty, license is the abuse of liberty. Ironically, when freedom deteriorates to license, real freedom is lost.

To avoid the loss of freedom, we must learn to act as free men. Fortunately, the Scriptures provide Divine guidance in respect to how free men are to act. In fact, one of Jesus' promises to His disciples is that by abiding in His word we will know the truth and the truth shall make us free (John 8:31,32).

Free from Slavery to Sin

In order to act as free men, the first thing we must do is acknowledge the true nature of that which enslaves us. It is interesting to note the reaction of those to whom Jesus said "the truth shall make you free." They responded by saying, "we are Abraham's offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone" (John 8:33). Their refusal to acknowledge their enslavement prevented them from experiencing real freedom.

The Jews' reaction to Jesus' offer of freedom is echoed by many today. Those for whom freedom has become license are enslaved to all manner of sinful lusts, but are unable to acknowledge their condition because, to their darkened minds, they are "exercising their freedom." It is no accident that the truth which sets us free is absent in the lives of those who deceive themselves by thinking they have no sin (see 1 John 1:8).

The truth is "everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin" (John 8:34). The validity of this point is obvious when you observe the one who is enslaved to alcohol, drugs, pornography, greed, or a host of other sinful lusts. What may not be so obvious is that this principle applies to all who sin, even "religious" people like those to whom Christ first delivered this pronouncement.

If Jesus had been talking about immoral publicans and harlots when He spoke of the truth settting men free He would, no doubt, have gotten an "Amen" from the Jews. However, He was talking directly to them when He offered them liberty and they couldn't handle it because they were in denial about their slavery to sin. They were "Abraham's offspring." They were "the religious right," the "moral majority" of their day. They could not accept that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23); that all need the Savior; that no one is really free until the Son has set them free (John 8:36).

Free from Conforming Influence of Culture

We must be on guard lest we repeat the error of the Jews to whom Jesus promised freedom. It's easy to be deceived into thinking that we're free when, in reality, we're not. This is easily done by denying the influence exerted on us by our American culture and our religious traditions. Our present day culture can lead us into conduct that in God's sight is immoral. Religious traditions can lead us to trust own righteousness, rather than the Son who makes us free.

The values (or "lack of values") of this age have led to an acceptance of conduct that in the past was clearly considered immoral. The fact that it is not always evident to us just how worldly the church has become is proof of how easy it is to allow freedom to be turned into license.

To avoid losing our freedom altogether, we must resist the cultural influences of our day. As God's people, we must resist the media-promoted notion that freedom is the opportunity to indulge fleshly appetites of all sorts. Instead, we must exercise our freedom in Christ to be an influence for good in American culture by showing the world that real freedom manifests itself in loving service to one another (Gal. 6:13).

Free from Religious Traditions

We cannot exemplify the freedom we have been given in Christ if we allow ourselves to become slaves to religious traditions. In Christ Jesus we are called to a life of "faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6). This life demands that we "honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king" (1 Pet. 2:17). To whatever degree we have allowed our religious traditions to prevent us from serving all mankind, we have denied the freedom for which Christ set us free (Gal. 6:1).

Free to Serve Righteousness

The freedom we have been granted in Christ Jesus is the freedom to practice righteousness. Whereas we were once slaves to impurity and lawlessness, we are now, in Christ, slaves to righteousness (Rom. 6:17-19). We can exercise this freedom no matter what our position in life may be. As the Lord's freedman it is our privilege to "submit ourselves for the Lord's sake" (1 Pet. 2:13).

Perhaps, the best illustration of freedom in Christ is found in these words from the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus instructed, "And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two" (Matt. 5:41). To act as free men in Christ Jesus is to not be enslaved to carnal lusts, cultural norms, religious traditions, or any other external restraints. To be the Lord's freedman is to be controlled only by the Spirit of liberty living within us, whereby we serve one another in love.❑

Paul E. Jarrett preaches for the Archdale church in Charlotte. Contact him at 1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210.

Live As Children Of Light

By Ernie Thigpen

YOU'RE DRIVING DOWN THE ROAD. Suddenly, you see flashing red lights, hear the clanging of bells, and watch a large bar descends across the road, impeding your progress. A train is coming. And you are stuck. As you sit there, you find yourself thinking, "Having to stop for on-coming trains—that's a bad law. It slows me down."

Finally the train passes, but now you're hopelessly behind. You hit the interstate and soon you are going sixty-five in heavy traffic. Suddenly, the vehicle up in front has lost control. You hit your brakes and move right, but there's really nothing you can do. You hit the car, and come to a abrupt stop. Before you realize it, your seat belt has tightened around your waist and across your chest and your driver's side air bag has inflated. You do a quick inventory and find that you're O.K. But you realize that the seat belts and the airbag have you trapped. You're stuck and you feel claustrophobic. As you sit there in your cramped condition, you find yourself thinking, "Mandatory seat belts and airbags—those are bad laws. They're too confining."

Laws and warnings are everywhere. "May be harmful if swallowed." "High voltage." "Flammable liquid under pressure." And we find ourselves thinking, "These are all bad laws. They all restrict our personal freedom. We need to get rid of these laws."

No, we don't think that. We know that those warnings are rooted in compassion. If someone didn't care there wouldn't be signs at railroad crossings, warning labels on lethal substances, and laws requiring seat belts and air bags. Those laws are acceptable.

There are other kinds of laws. Our physical world is governed by intrinsic laws of nature which determine what we can and cannot do. If we obey them, we benefit; when we don't, we're in trouble. How do you feel about those decrees of nature?

When was the last time you thought, "That law of gravity—that's a bad law. It slows me down. It keeps me confined to the ground. And every time I fall, I get hurt all because of that ridiculous law of gravity?" "Ridiculous," you say. We don't see gravity or another principle of our physical universe as either good or bad—just true. They just are, and we learn to live with them.

From where did our laws of the universe originate? God. God is the Author of the laws of nature. Just as there are physical rules that control our world, there are spiritual laws that guide our spiritual lives. God wrote those rules as well. Now, we generally feel grateful for warning labels and railroad crossing signs. We are generally neutral about and find ways to accept the laws of nature.

A good many of God's spiritual laws we also find to be satisfactory. Take the law against fornication. No objection here. That's a good law. And law against stealing. Good idea. And the prohibition on idolatry. Fine concept. Throw in murder and profanity and abuse against women and children and God has come up with a platform that we can wholeheartedly support. Why? Because we think we would never kill. We'd never commit sexual sin. We don't curse. Or abuse women or children. And worship an idol? You've got to be kidding.

No most of us wouldn't. But we sure like to watch. And we sure like to hear. And we sure like to read. We are fascinated by murder and fornication and adultery and profanity and abuse and several styles of idolatry. It's become our major form of amusement. We'll pay $7 to watch sin for two hours at the theater, $16.99 for 45 minutes of music celebrating sin on CD's, and $22.50 to read 350 pages of sin in the latest novel.

God's Word warns, "But fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed, must not even be mentioned among you, as is proper among saints. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly" (Eph. 5:3, 11–12).

We would never commit those sins, we think. But in careless disregard for what we let into our minds, we are participating in the unfruitful works of darkness that dominate our culture.

How do we feel about God's laws and warnings to be different from our culture? We don't like them. Why? They are too restrictive, too confining. They slow us down, make us feel stuck and claustrophobic. And so we choose to ignore the warning labels, rush to beat on-coming trains, never wear our seat belts, disconnect our airbags, and jump off the tops of buildings. Or, we might as well. The same God who designed nature, the same God whose compassion inspired caution, is the same God who says, "Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15–16).

When I was in elementary school, I almost always obeyed the rules. One day, several of the boys in my class were caught making too much noise in the hall. A serious violation of law. I was one of those boys. The principal, Mrs. Shuler, sent all the other boys back to our classroom, but asked me to follow her to her office. I could hardly breath. The noise of my heartbeat was so loud I was afraid I wouldn't be able to hear her. She sat me down in her office, put her are around me, looked me in the eyes and said, "Ernie, don't you know who your dad is? He's a preacher in our community and the president of our PTA. Those other boys may never do any better than what I saw in the hallway today. But you can. Act like your father's son. You'll never regret it."

God looks at the world and sees evil. He looks at us and sees His children. He looks at the world and finds only darkness. He looks at us and sees light. The people in the world may never be able to do any better. They may always be darkness. But we can do better. So, He sits us down, puts His loving arms around us, looks us in the eye and says, "For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). Don't act like the culture. Act like who I've made you to be. You will never regret it.❑

Ernie is the pulipt minister for the Central church in Spartanburg, SC. Contact him at 2052 N. Church St. Place, Spartanburg, SC 29303.

Genesis 1:1

By James Meadows

"IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREated the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). What do you believe about creation? What do you believe about God?

Our age is one of skepticism and doubt. There is the Atheist who denies the existence of God; the skeptic who doubts the existence of God; the Agnostic who claims to be neutral, neither denying nor affirming the existence of God; the Deist who acknowledges a Supreme Being, but who denies the Bible as His revelation to man; the destructive critic who professes to believe in God and His word, but who usually rejects the miracles and the inspiration of the Bible. Ours is an age which needs to be grounded in the truths set forth in this verse.

Genesis 1:1 is full of simple words yet eternal in the truths taught. "It is simple, sublime, satisfactory. It meets the needs of the case; leads us to God by exhibiting power, design, and intelligence. It provides a plausible explanation, without which we are in the dark" (Guy N. Woods).

"It assumes the existence of God; for it is He who in the beginning creates. It assumes His eternity; for He is before all things; and as nothing comes from nothing, He Himself must have always been. It implies omnipotence; for He creates the universe of things. It implies His absolute freedom; for He begins a new course of action. It implies His infinite wisdom; for a cosmos, and order of matter and mind, can only come from a being of absolute intelligence. It implies His essential goodness; for the Sole, Eternal, Almighty, All-wise, and All-sufficient Being has no reason, no motive, and no capacity for evil. It presumes Him to be beyond all limit of time and place; and He is before all time and place. ... The simple sentence denies Atheism; for it assumes the being of God. It denies polytheism, and among its various forms, the doctrine of two eternal principles, the one good and the other evil; for it confesses the one Eternal Creator. It denies materialism; for it asserts the creation of matter. It denies Pantheism; for it assumes the existence of God before all things, and apart from them. It denies fatalism; for it involves the freedom of Eternal Being" (*Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, James G. Murphy, 28, 30).

In the beginning

The word beginning is used a number of ways in the Bible. It means the beginning of months (Exod. 12:2); the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7); the beginning of the gospel (Mark 1:1); and the beginning of the Christian life (1 John 2:7). In this verse the word means "the beginning of the existing universe as conditioned by time."

God

God is named thirty-five times in the first chapter of Genesis and the first three verses of chapter 2. The word God is plural here and it appears in this form over 3,000 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. "The word God, which is the name of the divine nature, is often used under the figure of synecdoche to stand for each member of the Godhead. Because there is but one divine nature, there is but one God, though this nature is possessed by three distinct personalities, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and each of them is called God in the scriptures. (John 3:16; 1:1; Acts 5:3,4)" (*Questions and Answers—Open Forum*, Guy N. Woods, 291).

Ours is an age which needs to be grounded in the truths set forth in this verse.

Created

Three different words are used in Genesis 1 regarding the creation. "Created" from the Hebrew **bara** means to "create from nothing" (Psalm 33:9; Heb. 11:3). "Made" from the Hebrew **asah** means "to make—form out of preexisting material as a man takes lumber to make a desk." "Formed" from the Hebrew **yatsar** means to "form, fashion, from pre-existent material." The word create occurs approxiamately fifty times in the Bible and is always affirmed of what God does and never of what man does. It is affirmed of three things in Genesis 1, namely: (1) matter (Gen. 1:1); (2) animal life (Gen. 1:21); (3) the origin of the human soul (Gen 1:27). Man was made (Gen 1:26), formed (Gen. 2:7), and created (Gen. 1:27). Animals were formed (Gen. 2:19) and created (Gen. 1:21).

The heavens and the earth

The American Standard Version has "the heavens and the earth." The place where God put the heavenly bodies is called "the firmament of the heaven" (Gen. 1:14). The birds fly above "the earth in the oopen firmament of the heaven" (Gen. 1:20). And at Jesus' baptism "the heavens were opened unto him" (Matt. 3:16). Peter wrote "that by the word of God the heavens were of old" (2 Pet. 3:5). The "earth" refers to the dry land (Gen. 1:10).

Conclusion

"If the universe exhibits design, there must be a Great Designer; if it shows thought, there must be a great Thinker; if it is run by the law of nature, there must be a great Lawgiver; if it operates with mathematical precision, there must be a great mathematician; if the universe gives us important chemical combinations; there must be a great Chemist. Thomas A Edison said that the universe is such an engineering feat, 'there must be a great Engineer.' From these conclusions there is no escape." ***God Exists.*** ☐

James preaches for the church in Boiling Springs, SC. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of Carolina Christian Publications, Inc.Contact him at 324 Woodsong Drive, Inman, SC 29349.

In Memoria

A Tribute to My Grandfather

By Phillip W. Fite

THERE IS MUCH THAT CAN BE SAID about my grandfather, Van Clifford Walter. Many people from around the Carolinas will remember him for his contributions toward the spreading of the word of God.

In February, 1994, my grandfather read a poem he had written as a tribute to the family he loved. While praying about what I was going to say at his funeral, I thought about the importance of verse in his life and wrote the following:

For fifty-seven years you were a loving husband,
Always true and faithful, your wife's trusted friend.
By your side she steadfastly stood and in her need you went.
The father of three children who always looked up to you
Protector, provider, peacemaker, punisher, and playmate;
You were dependable and strong.
All the things that you were to them will live on and on.
The memories that you gave to them will be there 'till the
  end.
There were others who called you Daddy,
But that's because—that's what you were to them.
Whether we called you Grandpa or Pop-pop,
A better grandfather to us there was none.
We will remember you at the table with the worn cards
  in your hand, completed crossword at your side,
  always willing to play with us, throw the football with
  us, take us fishing or just sit and listen to our lives.
You always cared about your brothers and sisters.
They meant more to you than shared lives and memories.
You were bonded through happy and sad.
Their children gained an Uncle Cliff when they shared
  with them their brother.
Your many friends and Christian family were very special to
  you.
Time, advice, and help of any kind you gave freely.
You were a leader unsurpassed because in your humility and
  meekness you had
Wisdom and knowledge to make you strong.
You always strove to serve your God.

You gave comfort to the sick and in prison,
You sought to help the needy and gave whatever
you could.
When we are gathered together, it won't be hard
to see you, because you will always be
here—Behind the pulpit singing songs of
praise.
The most wonderful thing about you is
the God that you passed on to us—
He is great beyond compare;
He loves us unconditionally,
His knowledge is unsurpassed,
His grace is everlasting and
He lives in us every day.
This is your legacy, Cliff Walter—husband, Daddy,
Grandpa, Pop-pop, Great-grandpa, brother,
uncle, cousin, friend—
We saw the God that you passed on to us living in
you every day!

V. Clifford Walter will be greatly missed by his family and friends. His only great-grandson, Jefferson, put it best: "Pop-pop has gone to be with Jesus and he is in my heart."❑

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Van Clifford Walter
1918–1994

Life

By Van Clifford Walter

The years have come and gone
And it seems they have just flown!
My, how the children have grown!
What are years made of?
Growing up, school, games and joy
And the innocence of being
Just a girl or boy.
Time has been kind through the years.
It brought us joy and laughter.
Seldom did we walk the vale of tears.
What were the days made of?
Work and play were the mainstay.
But serving God must not be left undone.
Trust Him for the crown to be won.
Weeks and months brought education,
Sweethearts, family picnics, celebration.
Oh! What joy was brought by graduation!
Just being alive brought us to this day.
We're glad you have come our way.
Love has graced the minutes and hours
To give us the peace that is ours.
Love one another through joy or tears,
Be thoughtful and kind; do not fear.❑

Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

COLUMBIA, SC...The 51st Annual Carolina Lectureship, scheduled for April 3–6, will be hosted by the Windsor Lake church. James Meadows will be the keynote speaker. The theme will be "Consolation of the Saints: An Exposition of 1 Peter." The lectureship is dedicated to the memory of Howard Winters...The St. Andrews Road church will host a Gospel Meeting with Harvey Porter of Albequerque, Mew Mexico March 26–29.GREENVILLE, SC...The Edgewood church will conduct a Gospel Meeting with Roy Sharp from Freed-Hardeman University March 19–23.BURLINGTON, NC...The Mebane Street church will be hosting the Marriage Enrichment Seminar, March 31–April 2. Those interested in participating are asked to contact the church office at 919-226-4029. RALEIGH, NC...The Rochester Heights church is hosting a Ladies Day at the Brooks Avenue church meetinghouse on Saturday April 22. Jeanene Reese of Abilene, Texas will be the featured speaker. DURHAM, NC...The Cole Mill Road church held an intensive Teacher-Training Worhshop on January 28. Following an opening presentation on the dynamics of teaching, six different presenters demonstrated methods and resources for teaching the story of Jonah to all age levels, ranging from toddlers to adults. Anyone interested in having this workshop conducted in your own congregation should contact Wayne Massey (Education Deacon), Cole Mill Road church, 1617 Cole Mill Road, Durham, NC 27705. THOMASVILLE, NC...The church in Thomasville invites all to participate in a worship seminar conducted by Ted Waller of Lebanon, TN March 26–29. The theme for the seminar is "Bowing Down at the Feet of God" which is also the title of Waller's latest book. The seminar centers on the spiritual aspects of worship. MOCKSVILLE, NC...A memorial fund has been established for David Clinard to commemorate his service to others for the Lord. The fund will be used to build a boys cabin to be named in his honor at Carolina Bible Camp and Retreat Center. Contibutions in any amount are welcome and should be marked "David Clinnard Cabin Fund" and mailed to: David Clinnard Cabin Fund, Northview Church of Christ, 1210 Museum Road, Statesville, NC 28677. FLORENCE, AL...International Bible College announces the addition of Travis Harmon to the admissions office staff. He will be working as an admissions counselor, specializing in recruiting high school graduates. Some areas of emphasis will be youth rallies, workshops, and campus visits.☐

Send news items to Michael R. Mobley, PO Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115-0312.

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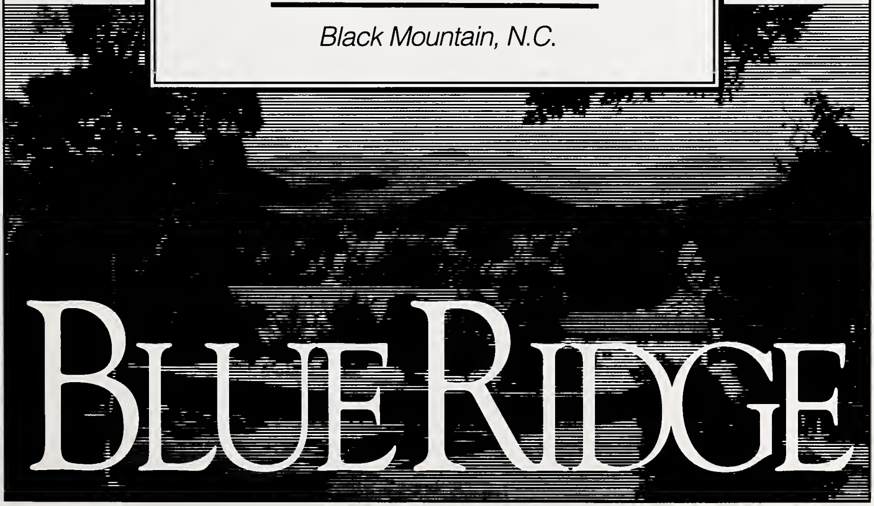

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL. 37, NO. 4 APRIL 1995

C289.21
C292

A MODEL CHURCH

STUDIES IN FIRST THESSALONIANS

Carolina Christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Road, Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: individual—$8/year ($15/2 years and $22/3 years); club of five or more—$7.50 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles—50¢/copy/month, or church mailing list (minimum 15) 60¢/copy/month.

Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes with Form 3579 to:
Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Address editorial matter to:
Johnny R. Melton
3305 12th Avenue Place, SE
Conover, NC 28613-9609

Address news items to:
Michael Mobley
PO Box 312
Mooresville, NC 28115

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PO Box 120
Clinton, SC 29325

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All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 10.

Order from Carolina Christian Bookstore, PO Box 1219, Yadkinville, NC 27055 (1-800-343-1081, Monday—Friday, 9:00—6:00).

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

APRIL IS THE MONTH FOR THE Carolina Lectureship. By the time most of our readers receive this issue of *Carolina Christian* the lectures, hosted this year by the Windsor Lake Church of Christ in Columbia, SC, will be history. This year marks the beginning of the sixth decade of Carolina Lectures. It is fitting that the Windsor Lake church decided to dedicate the Lectures to the memory of Howard Winters. Brother Winters, without question, attended more of the lectures, and spoke more often on the lectures than anyone else in the first fifty years of the series; and that record is not likely to be broken. Howard loved the church in the Carolinas, he loved the preachers in the Carolinas, and he loved to hear Carolina preachers preach. Howard was a good audience, he enjoyed hearing the old, old story, and he was a generous critic. This is the second time the Lectures have been dedicated to Howard. The Lectureship book produced by the Abilene Church of Christ in Statesville, NC, edited by Wayne Hatcher in 1978, was dedicated to him. He was honored at a luncheon during the Lectureship in 1981 when it was hosted by the Central Church in Spartanburg, SC. I had the opportunity to "roast" and "toast" my good friend and brother on that occasion.

Howard Winters was an integral part of my life from 1973 until his death in 1988. We worked at Carolina Bible Camp together every summer until 1987 (and he arrived at camp to work that summer, but was in too much pain to stay; his subsequent hospitalization and surgery revealed the malignancy that claimed his life nine months later). We not only worked at camp together, but we served on the Board of Directors of CBC together. It was at his suggestion that I was named to the Board of Directors of Carolina Christian Publications, Inc. in 1978. I began my editorial work, at his behest, by planning a special issue of *Carolina Christian* in February 1975, and after that I was responsible for the February issue each year until I was named editor in 1993. We attended lectureships, workshops, and gospel meetings together. There is no single individual with whom I studied more, and with whom I discussed biblical topics more often during those fifteen years than Howard Winters. He made a tremendous impact on my life and ministry. And so I am grateful to the Windsor Lake church for honoring the memory and work of Howard Winters.

Last year the 50th Carolina Lectureship was hosted by the Hickory Church of Christ and I served as the Director. A bit of controversy was stirred by criticism of some of the lectures in that series dealing with the issue of grace and law. Perhaps, in view of the honor bestowed on brother Winters by this year's Carolina Lectureship, and the perspective provided by the passing of time, it would be useful to revisit an article brother Winters penned in August 1981.

Law and Atonement

While both words are a large part of our vocabulary, we need to become better acquainted with the function of law and with the necessity of atonement—atonement apart from works of law. Perhaps we have never fully appreciated the fact that we cannot be saved by law...by any law! It is not the function of law to save. And certainly if we do not understand the fact that we cannot be saved by law, then we cannot fully appreciate atonement, which is necessary only if there is no other way to be saved. Law demands justice; atonement provides the means whereby justice can be done to the law and yet mercy shown to the sinner.

Law is useless unless it has a penalty (in fact, those who know law say that there cannot be a law without penalty), and once the law is violated the penalty **must** be paid before the law can be satisfied—a failure to pay the penalty nullifies the law. And a nullified law is a useless law (or, as the lawyer would say, it is no law at all). Law (including the Law of Moses) makes no provisions for pardon. Law knows only penalty; pardon belongs to another realm. Pardon is, when it is lawfully discharged, a remedial act—an act to correct some injustice that has occurred in the process of trying to carry out the law and administer the penalty justly. Only when a mistake (an injustice) is made in carrying out the process is pardon lawful. Where no injustice has occurred, pardon outrages law. Thus, as far as the law is concerned, pardon is an act of justice (applying corrective measures), not an act of mercy (setting aside the law's penalties). For this reason, when a law is violated, there is no lawful way to escape the penalty. Paul could therefore say, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Rom. 3:28.)

As all Bible students know, sin is a violation of God's law. Or as John says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4.) The penalty of sin is death. When God placed the first man in the garden of Eden He prohibited him from eating of a certain tree, "For," said He, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2:17.) To eat would be to disobey God's word. To violate God's word would be a sin. And the penalty of sin would be death. When man violated the will of God there was no possible way of escaping the penalty. Death was inevitable. It still is. Paul says, "For the wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23.) This is God's law. It cannot be set aside or ignored. Once sin is committed, once the law is violated, the penalty must be paid before the law can be satisfied or the sinner justified. Pardon is not part of the law. Death must be paid for sin.

But Paul goes on to say, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23; see also 3:9; 5:12; 11:32.) Now if we have all sinned, and if the penalty of sin is death, and if the violated law cannot be satisfied and the sinner justified until the penalty is paid, then, according to law, in which there is no provision for pardon, we must **all** die, be lost eternally, be separated from God for ever and ever. There is no escape from this (as far as law is concerned) because there is no possible way for one who has sinned to escape the penalty without nullifying the law (which in this case is the word of God, which is impossible to nullify). Were the penalty of the law set aside or ignored the law would lose its force—it would no longer be law. The law, therefore, offers no hope of salvation. Thus by the law no man can be justified before God.

How then can a sinner (one who has violated the law and therefore must pay the penalty of death) be saved? The answer to this question is the heart of the book of Romans. After showing that all have sinned, and that it is impossible for anyone to be saved from sin by law, Paul states, "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. 3:26.) Here Paul states the problem of salvation (and the necessity of atonement): God could not be just (do justice to His word, which said that the penalty of sin was death) and set aside the penalty of sin; yet God desired to justify (save) the sinner. How could this be done? Paul deals with this problem from Romans 3:20 to 11:36. He shows that the sinner was doomed but that Christ stepped in and died in his stead. The death of Christ pays the sin penalty—that is, it satisfied the demands of law. God Himself has provided the sinner's ransom. He can now be just and still justify the sinner. The substitutionary death of Christ pays the sinner's penalty. What the law could not do (provide justification for the sinner) Christ has done by His death on the cross. This is what we call atonement.

The sinner (which includes all responsible people) can now, by accepting Christ as Lord and by fully obeying Him as such, approach the throne of God with an acceptable substitute for his death, the blood of Christ. The death of Christ pays his penalty, that is, it satisfies the demands of law. The law's penalty is paid but the sinner is free. Or in short, the law is satisfied and the sinner is justified, justified not by law but by the death of Christ.

We must conclude therefore, from the teaching of the Bible and from all law, that salvation must come by the atoning blood of Christ, not by law. (*Carolina Christian,* Vol. 23, No. 8 [August 1981]: 15–16.)

A Model Church

Paul's letters to the young church in Thessalonica provide insight into the heart of the Apostle. Much can be learned about Paul's philosophy of ministry by reading these letters. Not only does Paul model effective pastoral care in these letters, but the church serves as a model for churches today. Of course, not everything in

Thessalonica is as it ought to be, but that can be said of every church today. So even there it is a model—not of the ideal, in this instance, but of the real. Michael Mobley has planned this issue of *Carolina Christian* on "A Model Church" with articles based on selected texts from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians.

It is our prayer that these articles will strengthen the church, not only in the Carolinas, but across the brotherhood.

GUEST EDITORIAL

Being a Model Church

By Michael R. Mobley

THE FAITHFULNESS AND LIFE OF A congregation is not measured by its programs and activities, nor by its size and numbers, nor by its traditions and changes. No, the faithfulness of a congregation of God's people is measured by its *spirituality*. Spirituality is a matter of what we are and what we are becoming.

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonian church describes a spiritual church as a community of people responding to, being transformed by, and growing in the working of God's grace because of their mutual love for, and faith in, God's Son, and their mutual love for one another. The letter teaches us that obedience is not merely a keeping of commandments, but a life-changing force. It teaches us that the spirit of a church—its mind and character, its heart and soul—is the reflection of the spirit of each and every member. So Paul writes to the brethren and describes true gospel obedience, spiritual leadership, the true nature and responsibilities of our spiritual relationships within the church, healthy attitudes toward the truth and toward God, and the motivation of our glorious hope in Jesus Christ. One powerful truth that goes to the heart of the letter is that the church is the work of God's grace and peace, the creation of God's work to redeem a lost humanity.

Maybe your church is struggling to navigate through the winds of change. Maybe your church is hurting from the dividing spirit that fractures the Lord's body and would tear it apart. Maybe your church is troubled by any one of a myriad of ailments—sins, weaknesses, levels of immaturity—that will afflict the Lord's body. However, if we will meditate on Paul's first letter to the Thessalonian church with the spirit of love for the church and not the spirit of ambition for one's own agenda; if we will come before God with the spirit of commitment to the Lord, of commitment to His Body, of commitment to our lives of salvation, and of a commitment to the lost; if we will open our spirits freely to God's truth and grace; I believe God will do many wonderful things that will heal His kingdom, our churches, and lift us to higher levels of holy and spiritual living and service.

The following articles are designed to help us to dig out the riches of God's truth found in 1 Thessalonians. May all the congregations of God's people be committed to God's glory and honor.

Michael R. Mobley, preacher for the church in Mooresville, NC, served as Guest Editor for this issue. He is also Brotherhood News Editor of Carolina Christian. Contact him at PO Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115-0312.

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A MODEL CHURCH

A Church Changed by the Power of God

By Terry Graves

THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH WAS A model church. Paul wrote, "And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia" (1 Thess. 1:7). This congregation was radically Christian. It had been changed by God's power. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:3–10.

The word "Christian" has suffered drastically. If you ask a half dozen people, "What is a Christian?", you will probably get a half dozen answers. Some folks believe you are a Christian if you are a part of the religious, political, and social structure of Western Civilization. To be a Christian is to be civilized. Others would say that a Christian is simply a person who is kind, generous, loving and considerate. Some would say that a Christian is someone who goes to church.

1 Thessalonians 1 takes us back to our roots—to a life that is radically Christian. It is one of Paul's first letters. It was written twenty years after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What is a Christian? He is someone who has "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" revealed in Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1:9). A life turned around—that's where life that is radically Christian begins. It is a life totally focused on the true and living God.

Let's take a look at the model church—people changed by the power of God. Remember what every church should be is what every Christian should be. What characteristics of the Thessalonian church made it so ideal and such a joy to Paul's heart? I want us to notice four characteristics. The Thessalonian church was an elect people, an exemplary people, an enthusiastic people, and an expectant people. (I got my four E's from Warren Wiersbe.)

First, the model church is an elect people. "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you" (v. 4). God is calling out a people from this world to be His very own. We are God's called and chosen people.

Election begins with God (2 Thess. 2:13; Eph 1:4). God acts first. We were in His heart before the universe was formed. Election involves love. God chooses us because He loves us. Election involves faith. God chooses believers. Election changes the life. Those whom God chooses, He changes.

The greatest evidences of election are faith, hope, and love. Election is demonstrated by "your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 3). What will faith do? It will make us work. It produces action. It energizes us. What will love do? It will produce labor, it will make you work hard in behalf of others. What about hope? It inspires endurance. It enables you to keep on keeping on. Have you been chosen? Have you been changed?

Second, the model church is an exemplary people. The Thessalonian church was a example in several ways. They received God's Word (v. 5). The gospel came with the power of the Holy Spirit and "with deep conviction." They were turned around by receiving the gospel as the life-changing, powerful word of God.

The gospel is life and death. It is oxygen and adrenalin to a man whose heart has stopped. It is a life raft to a sailor clutching at the waves that swamp him. It is a last minute pardon to a prisoner who sits on death row.

Along with power, the Holy Spirit brings "deep conviction." The Spirit's ministry has to do with assurance; He assures us of our belovedness and chosenness. His power is the power of authentication. His work makes the gospel message ring true. This power has a painful side and a joyous side. The painful side has to do with conviction of sin. The joyous side is the assurance of salvation and forgiveness.

The Thessalonians received the Word and they followed their spiritual leaders. Paul said, "You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord..." (vv. 5b, 6a).

They also suffered for Christ. "In spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit" (v. 6b). What a comment on the Christian gospel this is! Its news is so good that affliction and persecution cannot take away the joy inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Third, a model church is an enthusiastic people. "The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere" (v. 8). Their "work of faith" and "labor of love" were expressed in their sharing of the gospel with others. They were both receivers (the Word came to them) and transmitters (the Word went out from them).

Each Christian and each local church must receive and transmit God's Word. Do you share your faith? Do people know that you are a Christian? Do they see your faith, hope and love in action? Your words and your life should ring out the message of God's love in Jesus Christ. We need to be more enthusiastic about sharing the good news with others.

Fourth, a model church is an expectant people. They "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath" (vv. 9,10). The work of faith made them an elect people. Their labor of love made them an exemplary and enthusiastic people. Their "endurance inspired by hope" made them an expectant people looking for Jesus' return. They were waiting with patience and confidence.

False gods (money, power, self) offer false hopes and false security. We must turn to the true and living God and trust Him only for salvation and security. Because we have hope in Jesus Christ, we look for His return with joyful expectancy. We trust in the living God, therefore, we have a living hope. We trust Jesus who delivers us from the coming wrath. He is the only one who can rescue you from the downward cycle of idolatry, despair and disaster.

The model church is the church changed by God's power. The Thessalonian church applied the Christian message in their daily lives, a sure sign that their lives had been turned around. Let's make it our aim to have the faith that works, love that labors and hope that inspires endurance. Let's turn our backs on the idols of this age and turn our faces toward the living and true God.

Terry Graves preaches for the church in Shelby, NC. He can be reached at 845 W. Warren St., Shelby, NC 28150.

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A Leadership Style that Works! I Promise!

By Phil Kinzer

NOT A WEEK PASSES THAT ANOTHER brochure about better leadership doesn't cross my desk. They are advertising films, videos, cassette tapes, seminars, and books—all designed to help me become a better leader. Occasionally, what they promise is true. However, more often than not, I am left with another set of techniques that leave me frustrated and overwhelmed rather than free and confident.

It is not that I don't need advice on how to sharpen my leadership skills; I really do need it. But I am not a leadership guru. I need something simple; something from God. That's where this part of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians (2:1–12) comes in.

By definition, *leadership* is "inspiring influence." But there is not just one kind of effective leader. Some are hard-driving and rely on external motivation. Others are laid back and rarely raise their voices above a conversational tone. Good leaders can be found with all kinds of temperaments. But the essential ingredient Paul helps us with is *the ability to get along with people*. Without that one, a leader is not long for leadership.

Paul begins this part of his letter by giving some background on his earlier ministry among them. He says it "was not a failure" (2:1). It was fruitful and productive even though he and Silas had "previously suffered and been mistreated in Philippi" (2:2). Luke gives us the background in Acts 16. They had been beaten with rods and put in the inner dungeon. But they still had the boldness to continue leading for God when they arrived in Thessalonica.

It seems that the best leaders come from a scarred past. They can often lead more effectively because they understand suffering and ill-treatment. If you have a disability, it should not disqualify you from leadership. Whether it be a crippling disease, a sexually abusive experience, a broken home, a criminal record, financial disaster, or almost anything else, none of that needs to render you incapable of leading others successfully. Your survival through those difficulties has made you realize the value of hope. Just like Paul, your struggles may be the seasoning you need to make you the best possible leader.

As Paul describes his style, he points out four traits that should never characterize a Christian leader. First, *deception* is not part of the style of God's leader (2:3). They do not lead with any hidden agendas or faulty motives. Paul and Silas were sincere. In a word, they had integrity. Second, while good leaders are people oriented, they are not just about *people pleasing* (2:4). They do not try to flatter. An attempt to make everybody happy at any cost is usually a sign of insecurity. We need leaders whose goals are to find God's principles and guide us toward them. Third, they do not lead out of *greed* (2:5). A leader can be greedy for a number of things: money, popularity, glory, results, attendance and facilities. Any of these can take our focus off of God and put us in unhealthy competition with others. Self-control should characterize our leaders. Greed is a sign of losing self-control. Fourth, *authoritarianism* is not in the style of God's leaders (2:6). Paul knew that at any time he could "pull rank" on the Thessalonians. He could have intimidated them by his position as an apostle. But he did not abuse that. Instead, he came to them as a servant. He wanted to meet their needs without grabbing personal glory.

Paul then shares with us the positive leadership style that he and Silas used among these new Christians. First, there was *sensitivity to needs* (2:7). They were like a mother among them. Mothers are deeply committed to meeting the basic needs of their children. They have the ability to sense a need even when it is not evident to others. Leaders should imitate the kind of selfless, sensitive, and tender care they learned from their mothers. Second, Paul and Silas had *affection for people* (2:8a). These Thessalonian converts were greatly valued by them. They were warm and close. Leaders must love people and show that love in practical ways. Third, there was *authenticity of life* (2:8b–10). They were transparent with their lives just as good leaders today should be. The best leaders always live among their followers and know them well. Fourth, leaders must be *enthusiastic in affirmation* (2:11). Here he compares leaders to fathers. A good father will continue to encourage and affirm his children through their tasks, no matter what. All people need that kind of enthusiastic support. Leaders sometimes forget this. In their push to get a job done, they can become oppressive and degrading. Jesus Christ, the greatest leader of all, did not do this, even after all of His followers deserted Him. At His ascension, He placed the future spread of Christianity in their hands. By that, He affirmed His confidence in them. It resulted in the world being turned upside down by a group of former deserters. The **ultimate objective** for the Christian leader is to encourage, comfort, and urge his followers "to live lives worthy of God" who calls us all to live together in His kingdom (2:12). For those of us who do not have the time or energy to wade through all the latest leadership materials, but are serious about having that kind of lasting impact on others, Paul's advice works every time. Those around you will be blessed and God will be glorified.

Phil Kinzer preaches for the Providence Road Church of Christ in Charlotte, NC. He can be reached at 4900 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28226.

A MODEL CHURCH

We're Part of a Family

By Kirk Sams

THROUGH THE YEARS, FAMILIES have gathered together in a variety of familiar settings. The gathering together has occurred in homes over the holidays for the sharing of gifts and food; the gathering together has occurred in hospital waiting rooms for the sharing of tears and prayers; and the gathering together has occurred in funeral homes for the sharing of memories and goodbyes. In each of these contexts, a significant principle seems to remain true. At certain times, family is **FAMILY!**

It is not unusual at these times of gathering for past disagreements or family tensions to be placed aside for the urgency of the moment. A common ground is created for a time which, even though strained, allows all to join together to live in the current situation. As Paul communicates with his Thessalonian brothers and sisters, he shares his concern for their spiritual condition. Our usual memory of the Thessalonians is that the Bereans were "of more noble character than the Thessalonians" (Acts 17:11). The brothers who sent Paul to Berea by cover of night he now addresses, "But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you" (1 Thess. 2:17). Paul longs to see them because even though they are out of sight they are not out of mind. James Moffatt shares these words "'not where I breathe; but where I live, I love:' (Southwell, the Elizabethton poet, echoing Augustine's remark that the soul lives where it loves, not where it exists)" (*Expositor's Greek Testament*, W. Robertson Nicoll, Ed., Vol. 4, p. 30).

Paul's concern for the churches is evidenced in all of his letters, yet in none more intently than the one to Thessalonica. He is aware of the conditions which surround the preaching and practice of the good news of Jesus Christ. If they sought to persecute him, the Jews which hounded him all the way from Thessalonica to Berea would seek out his brothers and sisters in Thessalonica. His feelings are expressed vividly, "So when we could stand it no longer" (3:1, also verse 5). Paul even forgoes his own personal needs as he "thought it best to be left by ourselves" (3:1). A similar concern is expressed for the Galatians (Gal. 2:2; 4:11) and is indicated for other churches in his statement "I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28). He wanted to be with them even though something hindered his own presence. Paul wanted to personally remind them of his previous warnings "explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. 'This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ'" (Acts 17:3).

Once Timothy returns with the news of their steadfast faith, one can feel the relief in Paul thoughts, "For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord" (3:8). He continued to pray for the ability to be of encouragement to them because of their relationship in the Lord.

Paul then makes an impassioned plea to God on their behalf. He requests three specific things for his brothers. First, he desires to be in their presence so that he may "supply what is lacking in your faith" (3:10). Second, the desire for their love for each other and their fellow man to increase. Third, that they may be strengthened and made blameless and holy when they all come into the presence of God. Listen to the words of a very powerful song:

We're part of a family that's been born again;
Part of a family, whose love knows no end;
For Jesus has saved us and made us His own,
Now we're part of a family, that's on its way home!
And sometimes we laugh together, sometimes we cry;
Sometimes we share together, heartaches and sighs;
Sometimes we dream together of how it will be
When we all get to Heaven, God's family.

Paul saw church as family. A tie that binds. Blood is thicker than water, especially when it is Christ's blood. His concern for the Thessalonians is based on a desire to be in their presence, to place their needs above his own, and pray for their increased faith and endurance.

There needs to be a gathering together of the church of Christ. Family is **FAMILY!** Even in Paul's second letter to this same group, He will challenge them that even in a situation where a family member has continued to rebel and must not be associated with because of his decision, he is still a member of the family. "Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother" (2 Thess. 3:15). The distinguishing mark identified by Jesus was "By this all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one another" (John 13:35). Love involves the

(Continued on page 16.)

A MODEL CHURCH

The Lord Will Come Down From Heaven

By Walter B. Edwards

GOD'S CHILDREN MUST BE MORE than doctrinally correct! We must be people of principle, integrity, character, conviction and biblical application. Doctrinal correctness apart from ingrained life-determining teachings will never make us the spiritual family members our Savior wants us to be. Christian behavior is just as important as doctrinal conformity. The "old Jerusalem gospel" is as much Christian living as it is Christian dogma.

A recently released survey (*Charlotte Observer*, November 21, 1994) by the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company reveals that most people believe we have serious problems in America, but others are to blame rather than themselves. Call it the "I'm-OK-but-you're-not" syndrome. Proverbially, "the problem is with thee, not me." As Christians we must not have this attitude but must be willing to look at ourselves and see if there are "planks" in our own eyes (Matt. 7:3–5).

One promise which must daily influence our lives is the second coming of Christ. Our desire to be the "Model Church" will include a regular emphasis upon this great theme. The prophecy of the second coming is clearly taught in Scripture (e.g., Matt 16:27; 24:4ff; Luke 9:26; 23:37; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor. 4:5, etc.).

The Thessalonian Christians believed that the Son of God would come again but needed additional instruction. The inspired Paul wrote: "we do not want you to be ignorant" (4:13). This was a desire he often expressed (cf. Rom. 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; for a similar thought see 1 Cor. 11:3; Phil. 1:12; Col. 2:1). Contextually, he did not want his readers to be misinformed, or uninformed, about certain aspects of the "parousia," or second coming, which he discusses in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11. Four primary points are made.

First, in 4:13–18 he assures his brethren that those Christians who are alive when Jesus returns will have no advantage over those who had died prior to His appearing. It is apparent that they had some question about this. Their concern was for those who had "fallen asleep." Verse 14 is a comprehensive promise concerning the dead in Christ. "God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him." Verse 15 affirms that those who are alive when Christ returns will not precede those Christians who had previously died. "Not precede" means that they would not meet the Lord in the air before the dead in Christ do. Verse 16 indicates that the Lord will descend from heaven and that the dead in Christ will rise first. "Will rise first" means that the righteous dead will be raised before those who are alive go to meet the Lord in the clouds. "First" does not teach that there will be two resurrections—the first of the saints and then a second sometime later of the unprepared. The Savior clearly taught in John 5:28–29 that there would be one resurrection of all the dead—those who have done good and those who have done evil. Verse 17 teaches that after the righteous dead have been raised, they will unite with those who were alive and together they will meet the Lord in the air. "And so we will be with the Lord forever." The subject of the unrighteous dead is not a part of Paul's focus in this paragraph.

Second, in 5:1–3 Paul reminded them that since no one but the Father knows when His Son will return, it will be unexpected. The second coming is always imminent but not necessarily immediate. "Times and dates" (v. 1) is an expression used to refer to the unknown time of the return. "The day of the Lord" in this context refers to the second coming. These same words are often used in the Old Testament primarily to refer to God's judgment upon the wicked (See Isa. 2:12; 13:6,9; 22:5,8,12; 34:8; 61:2; Jer. 30:7; Lam. 1:12; Ezek. 7:5ff; 30:1ff; Joel 1:15; 2:11; Amos 5:18ff). Two illustrations are utilized to teach that the time of the Son of God's return is not known by man. The first is a thief (see also Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39; 2 Pet. 3:10) and the second is labor pains felt by a woman about to deliver.

Third, in 5:4–7 disciples of the Master are described as "sons of light." Since we live spiritually enlightened lives, we are not in darkness thus should not be surprised when He returns because we anxiously await it all the time. "Night" and "darkness" are metaphors the writer uses to describe the unprepared who live under the influence of Satan and sin (cf. Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9). "Light" is a contrasting metaphor which identifies those who have come under the influence and direction of Jesus and the Word (cf. Matt. 4:16; John 3:19–21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:26,46; Acts 26:15–18; Rom. 13:12; Eph. 5:8, etc.). Those living in darkness are further described as asleep, which in this setting, does not mean dead but unprepared and unaware that Jesus could come at any time. Conversely, we are to be "alert and self-controlled."

Fourth, in 5:8 Paul wrote that we "belong to the day." Consequently, we should put on the Christian "breastplate" and "helmet" both of which are vital protectors. Our spiritual breastplate consists of faith and love and our helmet is the hope of salvation. In Ephesians, Paul spoke of the breastplate of righteousness and helmet of salvation (6:14,17).

The Holy Spirit led Paul to conclude his discussion of the second coming with three thoughts. Through Jesus, God has appointed us to receive salvation rather than suffer wrath (v. 9). Wrath awaits those who "have no hope" (4:13), who preach "peace and safety" when just the opposite is true (5:3), who live in spiritual darkness (5:4–5), and who sleep when they need to be awake (5:6–7). Christ died for us, thus whether we are "awake" (alive when He returns), or "asleep" (dead when He returns), we will live with Him as one happy, redeemed, praising group (v. 10). Finally, we are to encourage one another and build one another up (v. 11, also 4:18).

What does the promised return of our Savior have to do with the Model Church? The Model Church will frequently stress this theme. In the Model Church are Model Christians living as best we can. Focusing on the "parousia" will contribute to this objective. Not forgetting this truth enables us to keep our hearts centered on heavenly goals (Col. 3:1–4). Every morning when you awaken think—"This might be the day Jesus comes again!" Maranatha—Lord come quickly! (1 Cor. 16:22).

Walter Edwards preaches for the Northview Church of Christ in Statesville, NC. Contact him at 1210 Museum Road, Statesville, NC 28677.

A MODEL CHURCH

Spiritually Mature Relationships in the Model Church

By Paul E. Jarrett

"BUT WE REQUEST OF YOU, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another" (1 Thess. 5:12,13).

"And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with all men. See that no one repays another with evil, but always seek after that which is good for all men" (1 Thess. 5:14,15).

It is tempting to divide the text you have just read as I have divided it, with verses 12 and 13 being addressed to the membership and verses 14 and 15 being addressed to the leadership of the local church. There may be some justification for such a division so long as we have a proper understanding of the ultimate criteria for leadership in the model church. On the other hand such a division of this text may impede the development of the very kind of leadership the church needs most.

It is my considered opinion that the main (if not the only) qualification for leadership in the Lord's church is spiritual maturity. The fact that the church often suffers for lack of spiritually mature leadership may be attributed, in great measure, to our having failed to make such maturity the goal of every Christian. If we are to have mature leadership in the church the message of texts such as 1 Thessalonians 5:12–15 must be held as binding on every member of the body of Christ.

Spiritually mature Christians will appreciate all those who labor for the Lord. They will not behave like Diotrephes whose love for preeminence caused him to reject others who labored in God's vineyard (3 John 8–10). Such conduct is indicative of gross immaturity. It resembles that of a spoiled child who cannot get along with others unless allowed to have "his way."

An especially high level of appreciation for those who exercise rule over them and provide instruction also characterizes spiritually mature Christians. A mark of a truly mature person is the ability to receive guidance and counsel from others. It is exceedingly immature for anyone to believe they "know it all." It is unprofitable (yes, even dangerous) not to pay attention to those who have concern for our souls (Heb.13:17).

Spiritually mature Christians hold men and women in esteem because of their work, not their power or position. In 1 Corinthians 3:1–4 the apostle Paul accused those who gave their allegiance to men of being fleshly (i.e., lacking spiritual maturity). However, in doing so, Paul commended the service of those men who had rendered service in helping to build up the body of Christ (1 Cor. 3:5–8). Mature Christians are able to distinguish between *respect* for God's servants which is commended, and giving *allegiance* to those same men which is condemned.

Walking in the path of peace is another characteristic of spiritually mature Christians. The wisdom of the spiritually mature person is not the wisdom of the world which is characterized by jealousy, selfish ambition, and arrogance. Rather, the wisdom of the spiritually mature person is exhibited in good behavior (James 3:13–18).

Spiritually mature Christians refuse to boast in their own knowledge, neither are they forever challenging, or displaying envy towards others. Instead, they dedicate themselves to using whatever knowledge they may possess to bear the burdens of others, seeking especially to restore the weak in a spirit of gentleness (Gal. 5:26–6:2).

Paul's counsel in verses 14 and 15 of our text is applicable to all those who consider themselves to be spiritually mature. While one would hope that those who have been formally acknowledged to be leaders of God's people (i.e., elders, deacons, ministers, teachers) would take this message to heart, it is important for every Christian striving for maturity in Christ to heed this counsel.

Spiritual maturity is not measured solely by how much Scripture we know. Instead, it is measured by how well we use our knowledge to edify others (see 1 Cor. 8:1–3). It is not enough to simply "preach the word." Real maturity requires that we do so "with great patience and instruction" (see 2 Tim. 4:2). In our text Paul makes this principle binding on our treatment of "all men."

In the absence of patience, our handling of the Scriptures can result in evil, rather than good. It is not unlike what may occur with any weapon. When properly handled, a gun may serve many useful purposes. It can provide food for the hungry, protection for the weak, and execute punishment on the lawbreaker. On the other hand, a gun can be mishandled to the point of doing harm to the innocent.

In our handling of the word of God, the sword of the Spirit, we need to be careful to exercise discernment. Paul acknowledges that there will be those who are unruly who need to be admonished. However, there are also the faint-hearted and weak. Subjecting these latter two to a steady stream of reproof and rebuke may discourage them to the point of abandoning the faith. They need encouragement and guidance. Spiritually mature Christians will provide them with what they need.

The church which wants to be everything that God intended will promote spiritually mature relationships. The key to promoting such relationships is for those older in the faith to have matured in their faith. Real maturity exhibits itself by always seeking "that which is good for one another and for all men."

Paul Jarrett preaches for the Archdale Church of Christ in Charlotte, NC. Contact him at PO Box 241002, Charlotte, NC 28224.

A MODEL CHURCH

Three Marks of a Mature Christian

By David Vaughn

EVERYONE WHO ENJOYS THE WINTER Olympics recognizes the skill involved in the gymnastic competition. There are many difficult routines that must be performed, but the balance beam competition appears to require the greatest sense of balance and concentration. Understanding the need for balance is a great blessing and help in life, and Christians certainly need to understand and follow this principle. The God-centered, dedicated life is a combination of accepting and following all of God's will for life. Developing a balanced life will help us in focusing on the truly important issues and prevent us from going after any number of distracting matters.

Part of living a balanced life is to concentrate on the externals of life. This does not mean that we are free to ignore other areas, but the person who ignores the heart is sure to fail. The beautiful, faithful life begins with the heart. When trials come, as they always do for the Christian, sustaining power comes from a heart that is in close communion with the Lord. The balanced life answers in the affirmative to the old song, "Is Thy Heart Right With God?" and the behavior matches the answer.

The Christian is aware of, and meets, both his social and spiritual responsibilities toward the people of God. Paul reminded the Christians at Thessalonica to live in peace, speak straight to the unruly, support the weak, all of which are social responsibilities; and to rejoice, pray, and give thanks, which constitute spiritual responsibilities (1 Thess. 5:14–18).

The Christians at Thessalonica faced some difficulties because of their new way of living—turning from idols to serving the true and living God (1 Thess. 1:6, 9, 14). In 1 Thessalonians Paul: expressed his thankfulness for their faith (chapter 1), reminded them of his work among them (chapter 2), spoke of the encouragement he received from Timothy's report concerning the Thessalonian church (chapter 3), informed them how they were to live in view of their faith and gave needed information about the Lord's return (chapter 4), mentioned the day of the Lord and practical admonitions about Christian living (chapter 5). The purpose of this article is to examine three admonitions in chapter 5, verses 16–18, and how this inner attitude should express itself toward the Lord.

Always Rejoice

The idea is "keep on rejoicing" because an attitude of joy is always in force. Some attitudes and conditions are always proper and Christians always have reasons for rejoicing. Even though joy is not our natural response to pain, when we look beyond ourselves and our environment, we are not looking "at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." By faith we see "an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" to our tribulations and we realize that our reasons for joy are far greater than our present adversities.

Christian people have numerous reasons for rejoicing. We have "an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven," said Peter (1 Pet. 1:4). The apostle also gives us assurance by saying that believers are also "protected by the power of God through faith" (1 Pet. 1:5). This is according to Jesus' promise that no one would be able to "snatch" believers out of His "father's hand" (John 10:27–29). Peter says that "In this you [believers] greatly rejoice" (1 Pet. 1:6). We rejoice because our sins have been forgiven and we stand justified before Almighty God; God has made us a new creation; we have been added to the community of the saved; our citizenship is in heaven; our Lord and Savior hears us and gives us help in our time of need.

No argument. We do have reasons for rejoicing, but what is our attitude? In our local congregations are we a bright spot or a dreaded blight? Is it our mission in life to gripe and complain about everything? Having a joyful spirit and attitude is not contradictory to faithfulness. Was not the writer who admonishes us to rejoice always a faithful servant! Let us count our blessings, admit the many good works that are being done to God's glory, rejoice that we have faithful brothers and sisters, and begin serving with joyful hearts. Remember thinking will cause us to rejoice (Phil. 4:8).

Ceaselessly Pray

Luke recorded that Jesus taught His disciples "that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart" (Luke 18:1). Paul admonished the Romans to be "devoted to prayer" (Rom. 12:12). Prayer empowers our weak and feeble efforts and directs our attitudes and thoughts to the throne of God. Prayer is an acknowledgment that we need help and direction, and a manifestation of our faith that God will hear and provide what we need. E. Stanley Jones said, "Prayer is opening the channels of our emptiness to God's fullness, from our defeat to his victory." Our supreme need is the presence and strength of God in life and Jesus reminds us of this need by saying "apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Foundational to all Christian thoughts and actions is an awareness of communion with, and dependence upon, our Heavenly Father.

Paul informed the Thessalonians that he constantly thanked God for their response to the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13) he urged them to be constant ("pray without ceasing") in prayer. Paul's admonition does not mean that every waking moment is to be spent on bended knee, but to pray without ceasing is to have an unremitting concern for others and the will of God. Circumstances are not to prevent us from having a prayerful attitude or disrupt the regularity of praying. As our dependence on God is an on-going condition our hearts need to be constantly attuned to God. Prayer is the key to the treasure house of God's mercies, blessings, protection, and strength for life.

In Everything Give Thanks

Circumstances must not cancel out gratitude. Neither gratitude, joy, nor prayer are situational or seasonal, but reflect a condition of the heart. In all of life we are, through Jesus, more than conquerors, and this should cause our hearts to abound with thanksgiving. The rebellious, though they knew God, did not honor God, and neither did gave thanks (Rom. 1:21). The heart that accepts God as God, and acknowledges His rightful place, is a joyful heart committed to prayer and thankful for all His great mercies. All of us have had times when it was difficult to see the good, but a recognition of the divine sovereignty and providence inexorably pulls us toward thankfulness. We know that God is able to use conditions, which we may identify as harmful, to bring about good (Rom. 8:28). Our thankfulness can rest on God's goodness.

It is God's will for us to have a thankful spirit because it is a key to contentment. Developing the spirit of thankfulness enables us to persevere, grow, and learn the true meaning of dependency.

Always rejoicing, praying without ceasing, and being thankful in all circumstances is a mark of a mature faith. All three of these virtues are seen in Psalm 100:4–5: "Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him, bless his name! For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations."

Let us yield ourselves to the will of God even in times of tribulation (Rom. 5:3–5; James 1:2–4; Heb. 12:7), "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing" (1 Thess. 5:9–11). May each reader seek to develop and nurture the attitude of rejoicing, constancy in prayer, and thanksgiving. If we will work on these things we will be more in tune with the Lord, have a greater positive impact on the people about us, and our faith and commitment will be strengthened.

David Vaughn preaches for the church in Gastonia, NC. Contact him at 1919 North New Hope Road, Gastonia, NC 28054.

A MODEL CHURCH

Will We Model the Grace and Peace of God?

By Paul Jackson

THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S CHURCH is of consuming interest to me, not just because I'm a full-time minister, but because I'm also a part of that church. I've been ministering in the Churches of Christ for the past 15 years. Not long compared to many, but long enough to wrestle with the basic implications of what it means to be the church. It has been an adventure, to say the least.

This adventure has led me into the lives and homes of countless people as I tried, often feebly by my estimation, to minister the love of God in the arena of human hurt, sorrow, and sin. From "bag ladies" to alcoholics and divorcees and those in jail to everyone else in between, the questions that always haunted me were: As God's man, what am I to say to the broken lives that lie shattered all about me? What is my message? What is the church's message to a world lost in sin?

These questions forced me to dig into Scripture and to form, what I believe to be, a biblical understanding of the church. In the balance of this article, I hope to establish a theological foundation for the church as "God's kingdom agent," as Howard Snyder puts it (See Howard Snyder, *The Community of the King*: [IVP, 1978]; especially see pp. 11–17 and 61).

It's more than an interesting tidbit to me that Paul begins and ends his first letter to the Thessalonians by reminding them of the grace and peace of God. "Grace and peace to you..." he says (1 Thess. 1:1), and "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.... The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you: (1 Thess. 5:23, 28). Could it be that these verses constitute more than a formal greeting or perfunctory benediction? Personally, I believe the apostle is conveying a profound truth in these verses. That truth is this: The church or people of God in community begins and ends in the dynamic reality of the divine work of God on their behalf.

To the communities of faith that would be recipients of the Ephesian letter, Paul exclaims, "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved...in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved..." (Eph. 2:4, 5, 7, 8a).

Paul's emphasis on God's grace in these verses form what seems to me to be the basis or foundation for the church's life. Also note that the resulting benefit of the gracious work of God in salvation is that "...now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace..." (Eph. 2:13–14a). And as Paul expressed to the Colossians, God was at work in Christ reconciling all things to himself, "making peace through his blood shed on the cross" (1:20). In short then, the church is the direct result of God's gracious work to reconcile the world to Himself through the cross of Christ. The church must never forget that first and foremost she is a creation of God's grace; the beneficiary of His peace.

When Paul blesses his Christian readers at Thessalonica ***with*** grace and peace, he is establishing, I think, a prism, of sorts, from which the church is not only to understand who she is but, consequently, it's the prism from which her ministry in this world is to be shaped.

Leonard Allen drives this point home well in his book, *The Cruciform Church*, when he writes: "God's reconciling work, displayed supremely in the cross, ***creates a reconciling community***...not simply reconciled individuals.... Here truth telling, sacrificial love, burden-bearing, meekness, and non-violence become the order of the day. ***Here divine grace spins off into graciousness. For the cross creates a new social order, God's reconciling community.***" (Leonard C. Allen, *The Cruciform Church*, [ACU, 1990], p. 131; emphasis supplied). In other words, the church is never simply a lifeless object in God's hands, but a living organism, empowered through His Spirit, not only to *be* the work of God but to *do* the work of God. As Melvin Hodges has written, "The church is...the medium through which He (God) expresses himself to the world. God has no other redeeming agency in the earth." (Quoted by Snyder in *The Community of the King*, p. 13).

It is only the church that knows the grace and peace of God that can effectively be God's kingdom representative, ministering reconciliation to people like John (not his real name), who is now part of our congregation at Helen Street. John, an ex-preacher, called me up one day asking if we could possibly help him out. He wasn't asking for money. He simply wanted to know if our congregation could be a source of emotional and spiritual support to him. His voice indicated a lot of pain and hurt. He began to tell me his story. He had preached for churches in the non-institutional wing of the Churches of Christ for about 20 years. His wife developed severe emotional problems. Nothing seemed to work. She didn't get any better, even after countless doctors and thousands of dollars spent. The church he was with at the time didn't know how to help. So, not knowing what to do, they actually turned away from them. They let John go. Eventually, he and his wife were divorced.

As I listened to John and reflected on what he was saying, I thought to myself, "Why would anyone ask can we help? Isn't the church in the people-helping business? Is anyone beyond the repair of God" "Sure, we can help," I said, "that's what the church is all about. After all, we know firsthand what it means to be forgiven, to start over. We've experienced the grace and peace of God through Jesus Christ. And now, God, in his tender mercies through his Spirit, is changing us, putting us all back together again—piece by piece. Please...come to Helen Street. We really want you here."

There are countless Johns, or Harrys or Cheryls or Genes or Pauls in this world. Look around you. They're all waiting for us—the church—to model to them God's grace and peace. "Grace and peace to you" prays Paul. Yes, I can't think of a better prayer for the church today. So let the church hasten her calling. May the pure light of God's "manifold grace" (1 Pet. 4:10, NASB) be refracted as it shines through each of us and in all our congregations—as light through a prism—to a lost and hurting world. As theologian Richard Neuhaus has put it, when the church dares to be the church, she "models for the world what God calls the world to become." (As quoted by Charles Colsen in the 1987 annual report of the *Prism Fellowship Ministries*).

Paul Jackson preaches for the Helen Street Church of Christ in Fayetteville, NC. Contact him at 500 Helen Street, Fayetteville, NC 28303.

Brotherhood News

Michael R. Mobley

STATESVILLE, NC...The Northview congregation is sponsoring a 19-day campaign to Irkutsk, Siberia, Russia April 6–24. The cost is $3100 and includes round–trip air fare, campaign expenses, hotel and food, and excursions in Moscow and Irkutsk. This cost is based on a minimum of 10 people, so that, as more people go the cost will decrease. The group will conduct daily Bible studies, lectures, spiritual growth classes for the church, and lecture at participating universities and colleges. For details, contact Gary Huey, Deacon of Foreign Missions for the Northview congregation at (704) 663–6106 or (704) 554–0800.

MOCKSVILLE, NC...The Jericho congregation's youth group would like to invite everyone to attend its very first youth rally, April 8–9. The theme will be "Is Your God Too Small?" and the featured speaker will be Geoffrey Sikes. The cost is $10. For more information call Pat Schenk at (704) 278–2147.

HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SC...The church announces that Geni West, 17, one of their members and a student at Hilton Head Christian Academy, will be representing them in London, England as a member of the World Exchange International Cross Country Team. The competition was held December 26, 1994 through January 2, 1995, and it is recognized by *USA Track and Field* and the International Amateur Athletics Foundation. Congratulations Geni!

COLUMBIA, SC...The St. Andrews Road church would like to announce that Jim Yarian is their new minister. He began his work in January and comes from New York. We welcome Jim to the Carolinas.

SUMMERVILLE, SC...The church announces that Wayne Altman will resign as their pulpit minister at the end of March. Wayne has served the Summerville church since July 1, 1968. We wish Wayne the best wherever he goes as he serves the Lord.

Send news items to Michael R. Mobley, PO Box 312, Mooresville, NC 28115-0312.

We're Part of a Family, continued from page 10... keeping of commandments, but it also involves the keeping of commitments to our God and each other. God, ever give us hearts that yearn to beat as one, never compromising truth but ever conforming to the image of your Son! Let His prayer become our desire: "That they may be one"!

Kirk Sams serves the church in Kannapolis, NC. Contact him at 2315 Concord Lake Road, Kannapolis, NC 28083.

MINISTER WANTED

The church in Port Royal, SC is in need of a preacher. Send Résumé/Tape to PO Box 156; Port Royal, SC 29335-0156, or call Bill Green at 803/838-4662 (after 6 P.M.).

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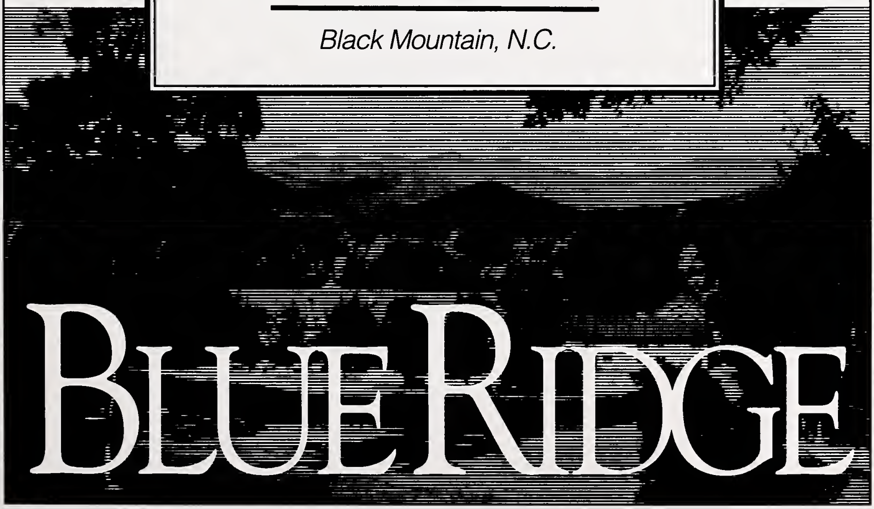

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL., 37, NO. 5 MAY 1995

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Carolina Christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
EDITORIAL & PUBLICATION STAFF
Johnny R. Melton, Editor
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
Jim Mullican, Associate Editor
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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Road, Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: individual—$8/year ($15/2 years and $22/3 years); club of five or more—$7.50 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles—50¢/copy/month, or church mailing list (minimum 15) 60¢/copy/month.

Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes with Form 3579 to:
Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Address editorial matter to:
Johnny R. Melton
3305 12th Ave. Pl., SE
Conover, NC 28613-9609

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Guest Editorial

The Importance of Preaching

By Jim Mullican*

PAUL SAID THAT "GOD WAS PLEASED through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe" (1 Cor. 1:21 NIV). He also asks, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Rom. 10:14).

The role of the preacher is crucial in God's plan. Some preach and teach one-on-one. This should be true of every Christian, as Jesus directed in the Great Commission (Mark 16:15–16, Matt. 28:18–20). Most churches find it expedient to support one man to preach to the saved and the lost who assemble each first day of the week. It is these men—"pulpit preachers"—who are discussed in this issue.

The jokes about preachers and preaching are numberless, but a story Rita Watson (see her article on "The Preacher—a View from the Pew") shared with me is sobering.

As the preacher's sermon stretched on, a little girl became impatient and started to talk. "Shh," her mother whispered. "I want to hear the sermon." Later that week, they saw the preacher while out shopping. The mother asked her daughter, "Do you know who that was?" "Sure," her daughter replied. "That was the sermon."

The preacher must live what he preaches. His example may do far more than his words in helping the congregation to become what God wants it to be. It is a heavy responsibility, and one to be accepted only if a man is willing to sacrifice many aspects of life which others take for granted (home ownership, employer-funded pension, permanent home in one location).

My thanks are extended to those who wrote on various aspects of a preacher's life and work. Some were hard-pressed to get their articles done between other obligations. Three of the articles were written by the guest editor because of the difficulty of finding capable writers with the time and willingness to write.

The goal of this issue is to help preachers clarify their goals and responsibilities, and to help all Christians better understand their preacher, his work, and his problems. Hopefully, it may help everyone to see and solve some problems which often result in hurt feelings for both the preacher and the church.

**Guest Editor. Jim serves as both preacher and one of the elders for the Central Haywood church in Clyde, NC. He is Associate Editor of Carolina Christian and also a member of the Board of Directors. Contact him at RR 4 Box 30-A, Clyde, NC 28721.*

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The Preacher's Personal Relationships

By Blake Nicholas

ON OCTOBER 11, 1992, I SAT IN THE assembly of the Ninth Avenue Church of Christ in Haleyville, Alabama, for evening worship for the last time before beginning preparation to move to Burnsville, North Carolina. Bill Dorriety, then the pulpit minister there, delivered a great lesson entitled "Paul's Instructions to Timothy." From 2 Timothy he made the following points: 1) Don't be ashamed of the Gospel (1:8); 2) Hold tightly to the pattern found in the Word (1:13); 3) Teach others to follow that pattern (2:2); 4) Endure hardships (2:3); 5) Live by the Lord's rules (2:5); 6) Practice what you preach (2:6); 7) Remind others to live for God diligently (2:14–15); and 8) Avoid much ado about nothing (2:16–17). I valued that lesson a great deal at that time, and do even more today.

Franklin Camp, in his book, *Principles and Perils of Leadership*, said that he "heard brother H. Leo Boles say that he read 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus once every week. He said that the instructions were especially for preachers and worth keeping fresh in mind" (p. 302). While it is necessary and important for those of us who preach to be earnestly carrying out our work as evangelists, we can become so wrapped up in our work that we neglect certain basic relationships that all Christians should endeavor to develop. It is my goal in this article to simply remind preachers that they have a responsibility to nurture certain relationships, and to remind congregations that preachers are people, too, and must be allowed to have time to build personal relationships.

While Hebrews 12 and 13 is not the first place that most people would go to define the proper personal relationships of the preacher, I believe it is a passage that deals with relationships all followers of Christ should be nurturing.

As the writer of Hebrews draws to a dramatic close, vividly demonstrating the superior nature of the new covenant through Christ, he reminds us that we can now approach God through Christ in His church. Hebrews 12:26–13:7 contains a number of ways that the Christian should joyfully respond to the opportunity to be a part of an unshakable kingdom. These are certainly applicable to the preacher, and his need to develop relationships within that kingdom. Notice five relationships the text contains.

The Preacher's Personal Relationship With God

"Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe" (Heb. 12:28 NASV). All Christians, and especially preachers, need to set aside personal time to develop their relationship with God. It is evident through Paul's writings that he took time to nurture his relationship with God. He knew God, and as the text suggests, out of gratitude he served God with reverence and awe. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:20–21). Paul recognized and respected the power of God. He had confidence through his study of Scripture, that God was able to do more than we can imagine, and that He will do everything that He has promised in His Word (Rom. 4:21–25). We would all do well to follow Paul's example of true devotion to and reverence for the Father. To

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do that we must make time for prayer and personal study in our daily lives, as Paul often instructed (Eph. 3:14; 1 Tim. 4:13, 15; 2 Tim. 2:15).

The Preacher's Personal Relationship With the Church

"Let love of the brethren continue.... Remember the prisoners as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body" (Heb. 13:1&3 NASV). The relationships that the preacher should develop within the congregation where he serves God are many and often complicated. In Hebrews 13:1, 3, the admonition for Christians is to actively love the members of the congregation, and to be sensitive and show compassion to those who are suffering. This kind of love is the love that is most needed by a congregation from its minister.

Often the relationship between the preacher and the young people is strained or non-existent. Teens and children shouldn't be ignored or overlooked; rather, they should be loved and understood. Youth ministers and preachrs shouldn't feel obligated to act like a child or teach young people how to act silly; they know that. The young people of a congregation need a preacher or youth minister who will serve as a mature role model for them, and who will lovingly encourage them to mature in the image of God. Our relationships with the young people of our congregations today should culminate in our echoing Paul's advice for Timothy to them: "Let no one look down on you because you are young, but be an example of the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12 McCord).

Paul also advised Timothy concerning other relationships in the congregation when he wrote, "Do not reprimand an older man, but entreat him as a father; the younger men as brothers; the older women as mothers; the younger women as sisters in all purity" (1 Tim. 5:1–2 McCord). The preacher should really exert himself in order to be close to each person in the congregation, as Paul suggests, like a family member. But the most important element of the relationship between a preacher and the congregation he serves is love. The congregation that Paul worked with and wrote to in Corinth was a church that Paul deeply loved. "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote you with tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you" (2 Cor. 2:4). Paul loved the church at Corinth enough to tell them the truth—enough to preach against the sins that were separating them from their God—and we as preachers today must love in the same way.

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The Preacher's Personal Relationships within the Community

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. 13:2). While it is possible that this verse has reference to traveling Christians, I believe that the hospitality of the Christian that is described here would certainly go beyond the bounds of brothers and sisters in Christ. We are instructed to do good to all men (Gal. 6:10), and to love our neighbor as ourself (Luke 10:27–37). There is a potential for untold good within the communities we serve if we are willing to show hospitality and be a good neighbor. Paul firmly believed this, as he told the church at Corinth, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake..." (1 Cor. 9:22–23). For the sake of the spreading of the gospel, and the saving of souls, the preacher must develop positive relationships in the community and show genuine hospitality.

The Preacher's Personal Relationship with His Family

"Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). For the Christian, marriage is to be given honor and great respect. The preacher's view of his marriage should be no different. Because every aspect of the preacher's work involves good works, sometimes his being "ready to every good work..."

(Titus 3:1), causes him to inadvertently put aside one of the most precious good works of all: nurturing his marriage and children. While meeting the needs of the congregation, he fails to meet the needs of his wife. While sacrificing great amounts of time teaching the congregation, he neglects the training of his children. Paul instructs Timothy regarding the qualifications of elders: “If anyone does not know how to rule his own family, how will he take care of the congregation of God?” (1 Tim. 3:5 McCord). Though this passage refers to elders, it points out a principle that applies to all Christians, including preachers. Our first soul-saving responsibility is to our own families. We must conscientiously set aside the time and energy needed to complete this task, and avoid letting other things interfere.

The latter part of Hebrews 13:4 discusses God’s judgment on those who are unfaithful in their marriages. Because marriage deserves such honor, and adultery such dishonor, preachers need to be cautious to keep themselves honorable. In counseling with women, activities with teenage girls, and in every situation in which we work with women, preachers should guard against putting themselves in tempting situations, or circumstances that can destroy their influence. Paul warned Thessalonian Christians to “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22).

Several years ago at a preachers’ meeting and luncheon in Hamilton, Alabama, brother Flavil Nichols, in a presentation regarding a preacher’s relationship with women, distributed a list of suggestions he had heard and received through the years that all preachers would do well to follow. The following statements are from that list: Don’t ask questions in counseling that are none of your business. Use extreme caution counseling with young teenage girls. You never know what they might do or say. Don’t ever be found in a car alone with a woman. When delivering teenagers, make sure a boy is the last one you take home. To some women you will represent the perfect man or husband; you will be considered a big trophy to their ego. If you must go to the home of a woman to counsel and she will be alone, always take someone with you who will sit in another room while you talk. Pray daily for wisdom, strength, and a desire for righteousness.

While all of these statements are basic common sense, it is the failure to use common sense in these situations that has caused many preachers and their families years of pain and anguish. Preachers can have wonderful relationships with sisters in Christ when they remember the admonition of Paul to Timothy to treat the younger women as sisters in all purity (1 Tim. 5:2). Jesus’ relationship with Mary and Martha is just one of several such examples.

The Preacher’s Personal Relationship with Elders

“Remember your leaders who have spoken God’s message to you; and as you observe their manner of life, imitate their faith” (Heb. 13:7 McCord). From Hebrews 13, the relationship that Christians should work toward with their elders is a relationship based on learning from their teaching, observing and imitating their godly lives, following their leadership, andappreciating the monumental task they perform in watching for our souls (vv. 7, 17). This year at the Freed-Hardeman University Lectureship,Dan Winkler in a lesson on the preacher’s relationship with his elders, made the following observations about Paul’s relationship with the elders at Ephesus recorded in Acts 20:17–38. The relationship that Paul developed with the elders in Ephesus over a period of three years as their preacher (Acts 20:31), was extremely strong, as seen when he met with them for the last time. They prayed together, wept together, and expressed their deep affection for Paul through hugs and kisses (Acts 20:36–38), grieving because they would not see him again. What was it about Paul, the preacher, that created this close bond between preacher and elders? Brother Winkler suggested five things about Paul that endeared him to his elders.

1. Paul served with humility (vv. 17–19). He was not concerned with being somebody in the brotherhood, but rather with doing something for the brotherhood.

2. Paul was responsible and balanced in his methodology, speaking publicly and from house to house. He was also balanced in his message. The lessons he presented were comprehensive (v. 27), protective (v. 28), corrective (vv. 29–30), sensitive (v. 31), constructive (v. 32) and prescriptive (v. 35). To endear our-

selves to the elders under whom we serve, we, too, must be balanced in our ministry.

3. Paul was impartial in his work as a preacher (v. 21). He labored with both Jews and Gentiles in his work in Ephesus. James 2:1–4 echoes God's expectations for His people to be impartial, for His preachers to work with rich and poor, young and old, intellectual and illiterate, black and white. The minister who desires to please God and endear himself to his elders will, like Paul, approach all men with love and concern for their souls.

4. Paul was spiritual in his emphasis (v. 21). He taught a message that changed the way people thought, resulting in a change in the way that they lived, and placing their hand in God's. Paul didn't address issues and hobbies. He led people to faith in Christ.

5. Paul was sacrificial in his approach to the ministry (vv. 22–24). While at the time of his speaking he was not physically bound, he was bound in spirit. He knew he had problems ahead, but he was willing to make whatever sacrifices were necessary to accomplish the ministry in which he was involved.

The words of the great song, "Blest Be the Tie," are so fitting when one looks deeply into Paul's relationship with the elders at Ephesus, and should serve to remind all preachers and Christians that we should love and appreciate the elders who care for us.

In all of the relationships that preachers should be nurturing, the most important element is love. We are admonished to be "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15), to "abound in love one toward another" (1 Thess. 3:12), to "forbear one another in love" (Eph. 4:2), to "walk in love" (Eph. 5:2), and the list could go on. When a preacher develops the proper foundation of love for God, His Word and His church, his relationships with the congregation he serves, the community in which he lives, the family that God has given him, and the eldership that he serves will be a blessing to his life.

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The Importance of Preaching

Why Do Preachers Quit?

By Jim Mullican

A VISITOR ARRIVED LATE FOR WORSHIP, and the preacher was already delivering his sermon. The late arrival whispered to his neighbor and asked, "How long has he been preaching?" "About thirty years," came the reply. "Well, he should be about finished," the visitor said. Unfortunately, many preachers do quit preaching after ten, twenty or thirty years. Why do preachers quit preaching? There are many reasons.

Morals

Four years ago, I was asked to speak at a workshop on "The Preacher as a Care-Giver," and that lesson was later printed in abbreviated form in this magazine. I stated that one of the dangers which a preacher faces in seeking to provide love and care to the congregation is that of becoming too intimately involved with women. A sister whom I have never met wrote to rebuke me for such a view. Yet this is indeed a very real problem.

In most congregations, women comprise two-thirds of the membership. Who initiates an immoral relationship matters little in terms of the damage to the cause of Christ which results when a preacher falls into immorality. In the congregation where I grew up, three of the eight preachers who have served that church since 1954 have disgraced themselves and the church by immorality. This is certainly an extreme example, but it happens too often to be ignored. Even if they repent and change their ways, few men will be able to continue preaching after such an episode. This is why Paul tells Timothy, "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim. 4:16 NIV).

Mistreatment

Some preachers become discouraged and quit preaching because they have been mistreated by their brethren. Perhaps he has been asked to leave with only two weeks' notice. Obviously, no preacher can secure work with another congregation in such a short time. Perhaps someone in the church lied about him and he was forced to move. These things are wrong, and those who are guilty will have to answer for them. Christians should always act like Christians, not like the world. Yet preachers should remember that Paul warned, "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and deceived" (2 Tim. 3:12–13). Such persecution may not always come from those outside the church.

Overworked

Some preachers quit because they feel overworked. The story is told of a preacher in a small community who regularly went down to the train station each morning to watch the 10:05 train come through. Eventually brethren complained and asked him to stop wasting his time. He replied, "This train is the only thing that moves around here without my having to push it, and I need the rest each day."

It is a fact that gradually over the years, churches can place more and more responsibilities on the preacher, so that he eventually collapses under the load. Work that can be done just as well by someone other than the preacher probably should be, so that he is left free to do his proper work of preaching and teaching.

More Money

No one becomes a preacher among churches of Christ in order to become rich. If so, they soon find their expectations were unrealistic. Fortunately, most churches today have become more generous in the financial support provided. Still, a man with the educational background and leadership ability necessary to serving as a preacher may find that the business world finds his talent much more valuable than the brethren do. Preachers become lawyers, professors, consultants, administrators and salesmen for many different reasons, but one is money. Perhaps that should not be so, but it is. The preacher has children to educate, a retirement to fund, and faces a time when he will no longer live in a "parsonage" because he is retired. A church which forces its preacher to give up preaching in order to provide adequately for his family is actively disobeying the will of God (1 Cor. 9:3–14).

Fifteen years ago in another state, a preacher told me that when the other teens went out for a hamburger or pizza on Sunday nights after worship, he literally did not have the money for his children to go along. He later became a school teacher because of the financial pressure of having children approaching college who couldn't even afford a hamburger. How sad that Christians forced this good man to make such a choice. Jesus said, "For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light" (Luke 16:8). Businesses pay well for talent and skill. Churches should do no less.

Wrong Motives

Some quit preaching because they should never have started. The old advice given to young men is still true. "Don't become a preacher if you can be anything else." That is, if your conscience will let you be content doing something else, you are not sufficiently dedicated to be a successful preacher.

Some have become preachers in an effort to compensate for some character flaw or failing in their lives. Invariably, they cause great harm to the church. One man who preached frequently on sexual immorality and lust later left his wife for another woman. Apparently he was seeing in everyone else his own weaknesses. Preachers who seem to constantly ride the same hobby horse may be telling more than they realize about themselves.

The only legitimate reasons to preach the gospel are a sincere desire to save the lost, serve the saved, and do one's utmost in serving God.

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Those who start preaching for any other reason will usually not continue to preach for very long.

Family Problems

Some preachers quit because of family problems. A wife who is a gossip or a flirt can undermine his work. Children who become unfaithful to the Lord can hurt their father. Some preachers continue to preach in spite of such situations, but many feel they cannot guide others if they have not succeeded in guiding their own family into the right paths.

Health

Failing health, associated with increasing age, causes many to give up preaching. This is natural. Most preachers continue to preach long past the usual retirement age, and only stop when it becomes physically impossible to continue. With Paul, they can say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. 4:7–8).

Criticism

Preachers sometimes quit because they grow tired of criticism. Everyone knows how the preacher should do things—especially those who have never tried to preach. In one location I was criticized for not wearing a coat and tie every day and "looking like a preacher." In another I was criticized for wearing a tie and not wearing jeans like everyone else. I have been criticized for buying a new car, for riding a ten-speed bike, for being too friendly and being too cold, and for growing a beard in order to look like God intended man to look.

Preachers seem to be handy targets for criticism, and some are unable to stand the heat, so they get out of the kitchen, following the advice of Harry S. Truman. Paul said, "I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself...It is the Lord who judges me" (1 Cor. 4:3–4). That should be the preacher's attitude, but we too are human, and criticism takes its toll. Those who wish to please God will learn to stifle their urges to criticize.

Desire for Permanency

Some preachers quit because they grow tired of uprooting their families and moving every few years. This is especially a hardship when he has children in school.

Concluding Advice

In light of these things, both preachers and churches can help to prevent preachers quitting.

Preachers need to be careful to maintain moral purity, pay attention to their families, not be overly sensitive, and not be greedy.

Churches need to show consideration for the preacher's feelings, support him adequately, and not over-burden him with work others could do.

A little thoughtfulness and care both in the pulpit and in the pew might keep many good men preaching.

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The Preacher and Freshness

By Dennis Conner

THE PREACHER ASCENDED THE pulpit as he had done week after week, year after year, and looked out over the audience at faces he had seen week after week, year after year. As the preacher examined the faces of the people before him, he knew that the same unspoken question filled their minds at that moment, "I wonder if he will have anything meaningful to say today?" It was a fair question. After all, he had asked it of himself just this past week. Come Sunday, would he have anything to say that would speak afresh to the various situations of his listeners?

One of the greatest sins of preaching is staleness, and one of the preacher's greatest challenges is freshness. The temptation to staleness, and the challenge of freshness confront the preacher anew every week. There are many reasons for a preacher to be satisfied with staleness in his preaching. Every way he turns there are demands being made on his time and emotions. There are visits that need to be made, people to be counseled with, people to be studied with, Bible classes to prepare for, involvement with community projects, time to be spent with his family, and on and on, until there is really very little time left for the one thing he really needs to do well—prepare a message from God's word. Yes, it is much easier to settle for staleness then to strive for freshness, but the conscientious preacher dare not commit that sin. So how can the preacher maintain freshness amidst all the rigors, routines, and demands of ministry?

As we attempt to answer this question, it is necessary in the first place to define "freshness." For many, freshness is equivalent to innovation—new ideas, new and different ways of saying things. Perhaps innovation may be one manifestation of freshness, but it may also be nothing more than sheer cleverness, and cleverness is not necessarily a spiritual attributeFor others, freshness may mean little more than variety and the simple absence of repetition. Indeed, there are those preachers who never even begin to plumb the limitless depths of God's word, allowing themselves to become preoccupied with the same issues in ministry (a sure-fire formula for staleness). Yet, it is possible to introduce variety to one's preaching and ministry, and still be stale if there is little passionor conviction. So, if freshness is not innovation or variety, then what is it?

In my experience, I have found that people do not simply want to hear something clever or different or innovative. Rather, they want to hear a word that will help them to make sense of their lives. As Lynn Anderson put it in his book, *Freshness for the Far Journey*, "To be fresh is to make sense in the deep places." Preaching that is fresh is preaching that is able to relate the word of God to the business of living, and therein lies the challenge.

How does the preacher begin to meet the challenge of freshness? He begins with himself. That is, before the message will be fresh, the man must be fresh. Anderson went on to write, "To be fresh is...to keep growing, to evidence a current walk with the living Christ." Freshness grows out of the vitality of the preacher's own relationship with God. To have something meaningful to say week after week, we must grow deeper in God day by day. As preachers, we cannot speak convincingly of joy in Christ if we have not experienced it ourselves. We dare not call others to obedience when we ourselves have been self-willed. We cannot speak to others of the life of faith when we find ourselves walking by sight. Preaching that is fresh comes from a heart that has daily encountered the living God. It may be that we can fool our audience for a while, preaching sermons and conducting a ministry that seem to have depth, but eventually the withered fruit of a stale relationship with God will be recognized.

Thus, we who preach Christ to others must know Him ourselves. This means that we must make our own spiritual growth a priority. In spite of the demands made on our time, we must make time for the nurturing of our own souls. Time must be given to prayer, to the study of the Scriptures (beyond the study that is done for sermons and classes), to self-examination and confession, and to fellowship. The preacher cannot feed the souls of others when he has neglected his own soul. He can hardly speak a meaningful word to others when the word has not been meaningful to him. So it is, then, that we who preach must first prepare ourselves before we prepare our sermons. When this order is followed, we will be more likely to share a fresh word with our fellow disciples.

Now we are ready to think about the message itself. The average person may make one or two major speeches in a lifetime. The preacher is called upon to make at least one major speech every week. Assuming that he has given attention to his own relationship with God, what else can he do to maintain freshness in his messages? The following suggestions are not exhaustive by any means, but will help to keep us on the right track.

First, preach expositorily. Expository preaching focuses on a particular passage of Scripture in its context, drawing out of the text the relevant truths that are there, and then seeks to apply those truths to the contemporary situation of the audience. One of the great benefits of this kind of preaching is that the biblical text itself, not the cleverness or ingenuity of the preacher, determines the message. It also limits to some degree the interjection of the preacher's own opinions, helping to keep the focus on what God has to say. When practiced responsibly, expository preaching brings the listeners a word from God, which is always fresh and meaningful.

A second suggestion would be to preach in series. One of the great struggles for preachers is determining what to preach on next Sunday. Series preaching (especially a series on a book of the Bible) helps to alleviate that problem. Occasionally a preacher can be heard to say, "Sometimes my well (the well of preaching themes) just runs dry." That may be true when we rely upon our own resourcefulness, but the benefit of preaching an expository series is that the well of God's word never runs dry. If anything, it becomes a problem of what *not* to preach, rather than what to preach. Another advantage of preaching in a series is that it provides continuity and gives our listeners a better overall grasp of the message of a book or theme. Both of these benefits of series preaching (abundance of texts and continuity) will contribute to freshness in preaching.

Third, we must learn to direct our messages to the needs of our listeners. How do we find out what those needs are? First, by getting to know people. Get involved in their lives as much as possible. Talk to them, and listen with sensitivity. Surveys and questionnaires can also be helpful in determining the needs of our audiences. When messages are directed toward real life situations and concerns, people will be more apt to listen.

Finally, do not neglect the essential element of prayer. For many of us the admonition, "Don't forget to pray," has become a tired cliche, but the fact remains that sermons that are baptized in an attitude of heartfelt prayer generally take on a perceptible sense of vitality and freshness. Prayer can make a difference in the way a sermon is preached, and the way it is heard.

It is not so important that we be clever, innovative or ingenious in the conducting of our preaching ministries. What is important is that we be able to relate the Word of God to the deep places in people's lives, both in the way we live before others and in the way we preach.

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Should I Move or Stay?

By Jim Mullican

PREACHERS MOVE. SOME MOVE MORE frequently than others, but almost all move to work with another congregation periodically. In a survey conducted among preachers in 1980, less than two percent indicated they had been preaching for the same congregation more than twenty years.

In fact, the tenure given for the 892 men who were surveyed seems to indicate that half of the preachers moved about every four years. Only six percent of the preachers surveyed had been in their present locations more than ten years.

Every preacher wrestles with the decision of whether to move or stay. Each situation is unique, so it is impossible to give guidelines for every case. A preacher may need to be nearer his elderly parents in their declining years. He may need to be near a Christian school so that his children may attend without the additional expense of room and board. His own health or that of a family member may require a change of climate. These and other legitimate concerns will affect some, but the purpose of this article is to discuss the more usual circumstances which cause a preacher to ask himself, "Should I move or stay?"

Bad Reasons for Moving

Two reasons for preachers moving should not really be considered.

The first is the opportunity to work with a big church. In the business world, such ambition to "move up the corporate ladder" may be common, but it is inappropriate for those who claim to follow Jesus. He taught that greatness comes through service, and that the one who is truly great will be willing to take the place of least importance (Matt. 23:11–12, Luke 9:46–48). Large churches need preachers too, but if size is the main criterion by which a preacher evaluates a church, his priorities are definitely wrong. It would be far more appropriate to seek to lead a smaller church into becoming a big one. That is the preacher's real challenge.

The second wrong reason for moving is to secure more money. Yes, preachers need to be supported financially by the church in order to be able to preach and teach on a full-time basis. There may even be times when the financial support is simply insufficient for the preacher's family to live on it, and a move may be necessary if the church is unwilling or unable to fulfill its financial responsibility. More than twenty years ago, a young preacher began working with a church at an agreed salary of $150 per week. Four years later, he had received no increases in support, while inflation had reduced the value of his salary to $110. He found it necessary to move.

However, about that same time, another young preacher, a classmate of the above-mentioned man and of this writer, was working as associate minister for a large congregation. The pulpit preacher resigned, and a well-known preacher was contacted about replacing him. He agreed, but only if they would pay him $65,000 per year. This was twenty years ago, so the equivalent today would be approximately $160,000! Preachers can fall victim to both pride and greed, but if so, they need to either change their attitudes or quit preaching. Such a mercenary attitude is inconsistent with the teaching of Jesus, who said, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8 NIV).

Good Reasons for Moving

If the church asks a preacher to move, that is obviously an indication that he should do so. Don't start trying to change their minds by mustering support among close friends. Don't leave the church divided, even if they all continue to meet in the same building. Those who don't love the church and individual Christians should not be preaching, and those who do love the church will seek its unity, even over the satisfaction of striking back at those who hurt the preacher's feelings.

Churches have personalities, just like individuals do. So do preachers. There are probably many people to whom each of us could be happily married, and many others with whom we'd be miserable. The same is true of preachers and churches. Sometimes a preacher and a church agree to work together before they really know each other, and later realize they made a mistake. That does not necessarily mean he is a bad preacher or that something is wrong with the church. The preacher's personality and that of the church simply do not mesh. In such a case, the preacher should admit the truth and move on. The church may do a better job next time finding a preacher who fits in better with its personality.

Fourteen years ago, this writer was in the process of looking for a new place to preach. One church in which I was particularly interested did not invite me to come, but invited another man. His bulletin articles were filled with grammatical errors which made me cringe. However, during his fourteen-year tenure, that congregation has grown from approximately 160 to 330 members. Grammar is not everything in the work of a preacher, and that man has obviously done an excellent work in that particular church, even though his personality might not have been well-received in a highly educated and sophisticated church. He and the congregation appear to be well-matched, and are doing great things for the Lord.

A third reason to move may be that a preacher has simply "run dry." People don't want to hear "repeats" from the pulpit, and eventually a preacher may have covered every topic he can think of. The deadline of coming up with two new sermons every week can take its toll. The Bible contains a wealth of material, but after picking up the nuggets lying on the surface, a great amount of time and effort must be expended to mine the more deeply-buried riches, and the constraints of visitation, preparation of classes, counseling, bulletin writing, and other activities which the preacher must handle often leave him without adequate time to study deeply. A church which desires to keep its preacher should avoid loading him down with too many other responsibilities. Let others shoulder some responsibility, and the preacher will have time to keep the well of spiritual wisdom flowing freely.

The time may come when the preacher realizes that someone else could do a particular work better. For whatever reason, he is not successfully reaching the lost or helping the saved to grow. If the cause of the impasse cannot be corrected, it may be time to move.

Last, he may realize that he could do a better work elsewhere. I might not be effective in Boston, but may be in Clyde, North Carolina. If so, then I should probably seek to work in Clyde. Fortunately I did, and the brethren have been kind enough to keep me here.

Good Reasons for Staying

If a preacher is loved and respected, he should probably stay where he is. That kind of relationship takes time to build, and frequent moves do not facilitate such feelings. A preacher who has been with a congregation a long time may be able to tell them what they need to hear. They accept it because of the mutual love and respect between the preacher and the congregation. The same sermon from a new preacher might be offensive.

If the church is growing and at peace, the preacher should probably stay. He is doing a good work. Many churches are not growing, and some are polarized by divisive issues. The average church of Christ is growing at less than one-half of one percent annually. If the congregation you work with is doing better, it may be unwise to "jump ship."

If a preacher is fortunate enough to be associated with a congregation of true disciples who are willing to share the work load with him, he should probably stay. His work is to preach and teach, and if others are willing to share responsibilities for the visiting, comforting, youth work, inviting, Bible class program, and planning for growth, he is fortunate. Many think the preacher is responsible for everything.

If a congregation is willing to accept admonition and correction without anger and resentment, the preacher is fortunate. He is working with people truly interested in growing into the image of Christ, and he should not be anxious to "trade them" for an unknown entity.

Finally, a church that desires to follow the Bible wherever it leads is not one to be abandoned lightly. In the town where I was born, there was a brother who became convinced from his study of the Bible that he and his wife of many years had no scriptural right to be married, since he had been divorced and remarried before becoming a Christian. However, he had a family to support. His personal decision was to build a small room behind the family home. He continued to support his family, ate with them, and was a father to his children, but at night he slept in that small room behind the house. Whether or not one agrees with his conclusion, it is impossible to not admire his dedication to what he believed the Scriptures to teach. Those willing to follow the Bible even when it is not convenient are a pleasure to work with.

Advice for Churches

If you have a preacher you want to keep, don't assume that he knows you are happy with his work. Tell him. Tell him often. Preachers can become discouraged when they put a great deal of study and effort into a lesson and then hear the usual "Good sermon. Fine lesson. Enjoyed it." Let him know if it caused you to set new goals or to re-examine your life.

Encourage him to stay in other ways. Annual increases in his financial support to keep up with inflation are absolutely essential. To make him feel appreciated, give him more than a "cost-of-living increase." Give him additional vacation time with increased tenure. The brethren here at Central Haywood provided in our working agreement two weeks of vacation annually for the first three years, three weeks annually for years four through nine, and four weeks annually after ten years. There are two additional weeks for meetings or attending lectureships. These encourage a preacher to stay. If you want him to stay, let him know in various ways that he is loved and appreciated.

Footnotes

[1] Batsell Barrett Baxter, et al, *Preachers of Today, Volume V* (Nashville: Preachers of Today, 1982), p. x.

The Importance of Preaching

The Preacher's Many and Varied Responsibilities

By Jim Hunter

AND HE MUST LOVE CHICKEN!! you say, "What has this to do with 'The Preacher's Many and Varied Responsibilities'?" Well, you may not believe it, but it has been my experience that eating chicken has much to do with it. I soon learned this over 21 years ago when I first began preaching. Now, please don't misunderstand me. I have nothing against chickens, dead or alive; I just did not eat chicken back then. But I soon learned that people, church members or otherwise, don't quite know how to take a preacher who doesn't like to eat chicken. After all, for many years preachers have been hearing, "Preach the Word and eat the Bird!" I suppose this was one of my first tests of meeting "The Preacher's Many and Varied Responsibilities," second only to holding fast "the form of sound words" delivered unto me by faithful teachers of God's Word (2 Tim.1:13; Titus 1:9).

There is no greater joy for me than to be involved in the many and varied responsibilities which accompany the work of being a gospel preacher. It affords me opportunities to meet and work with others in such a way that perhaps most people do not have. A preacher has greater opportunities to share or participate in the sorrows as well as the joy of others than most other church members . And there is no joy, in my judgment, that exceeds the excitement of leading someone to Christ through baptism. However, as much joy as there is in the work of the preacher, there are also burdens and heartaches to be endured when folks just refuse to allow Jesus to control their walk in life.

The book of 1 Timothy is an excellent starting point to relate God's view of the preacher's many and varied responsibilities. He is to "teach no other doctrine," heed godly edifying rather than fables and endless genealogies, love "out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned," be a man of godliness—that is, live a godly pattern for the unbeliever, be a faithful soldier of the cross and "war a good warfare" hold "faith and a good conscience," be a man of prayer, remember who he is, remind the brethren of the possibility of departing from the faith, be a student of God's Word, exhort and meditate, take heed to himself and to the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and treat all people equally (1 Tim. 1:3–5, 1:16–19, 2:1, 3:15, 4:1–16, 5, 6). Of course, these few suggestions only begin to deal with Paul's exhortation of duties and responsibilities to the young preacher, Timothy.

Perhaps to summarize the above suggestions and also to expand the "expected" responsibilities of the preacher by the local congregation, we could list the following: **(1) Be a student of God's Word and teach the gospel to others**. Teach it from the pulpit; teach it from the Bible class; teach the good news about Jesus in home Bible studies; teach it by means of radio and television; teach it from newspaper articles; teach the message of Jesus in gospel meetings and lectureships; teach it when conducting funerals and weddings. **(2) Build/Encourage/Edify** by writing letters, cards, notes and making phone calls to church members and visitors. The preacher seeks to build up God's church; he encourages church attendance by teaching the positive purposes of a faithful Christian life (This is not to say there is never reason to teach negatively); he cooperates with the eldership and seeks to lift them up; he does not become a dictator. He often becomes a counselor who encourages the spiritually weak; he counsels marriage partners; he's a pre-marital counselor; he often becomes a mediator between two or more people whose relationships have become strained. The preacher often becomes a "cheer-leader," "a spark plug," an "organizer," a "facilitator". He makes frequent hospital visits as needed; he visits members and visitors in their homes, often having to sacrifice time needed to be with his own family. He must have strong convictions and high motives, refraining from personal glory and egotism, be sincere, have a good workable knowledge of God's Word and a sympathetic, compassionate heart. **(3) Church secretary** may also be part of the preacher's job description. He may order Bible class material, write church letters, prepare the weekly bulletin, and perform a host of other duties associated with "secretarial" responsibilities.

Sometimes the preacher may also be called upon to be a painter, a plumber, an electrician, a carpenter, the janitor, a landscaper, a computer expert, a tele-marketing coordinator. Other responsibilities may include being a song leader and treasurer. If the preacher is married, he must be a faithful and understanding husband, giving his wife appropriate time and attention, not taking her for granted. If children are still at home, he must be a loving, caring and understanding father. Above all, the preacher must be a faithful Christian in every sense of the word. The preacher must realize his need for humility, honesty, uprightness, integrity and dignity.

Several years ago I came across the following from an anonymous source which I would like the reader to consider:

What Should I Expect from My Minister?

1. That he spend a great deal of time in study and preparation for each lesson.
2. An edifying and instructional lesson from God's Word each time he steps into the pulpit.
3. His counsel when I have a problem.
4. His good influence over my family and friends.
5. His assistance in converting my neighbors and friends.
6. His visits and prayers when I am sick.
7. Courage to denounce sin, kindly but firmly, without fear or favor, in and out of the pulpit.
8. His concern, sympathy and consolation when death invades my home.

What My Minister Should Expect from Me

1. My presence and attention at each service.
2. My prayers that God will strengthen him, and give him a generous portion of wisdom that he may be used mightily in his ministry.

3. My whole-hearted support of every good work.

4. My understanding of his needs and problems and my respect for the great work he has undertaken.

5. To remember that while he is God's spokesman, he is still very human and makes as many mistakes as I do.

6. To refrain from undue criticism or from being a party to gossip that would hinder his work.

7. To support him and his family, and be considerate of their time.

I realize these thoughts only begin to describe or address the duties and responsibilities of the preacher, but I believe they reveal the tremendous skills involved in being an effective gospel preacher. There is one thing for certain: if the preacher fails to hold fast the pattern of sound words, it matters not how skillful he may be in all the other areas of duty and responsibility. If he fails to reach the glories of heaven which lie on the other side of this earthly life, all the other skills developed have been for nought. He has simply failed the most needed duty and the primary responsibility required in a servant of the Master. He must never lose sight of his main objective, i.e., "seeking and saving lost souls" which begins with himself. Praise God for godly men who have devoted their lives in service to God and man. Thank God for the dedicated, devoted wives and children who support these men in their vocation! May God continue to bless the local congregation which loves and supports that godly man and his family!

By the way, I have learned to accept the responsibility of eating chicken! I now like it and I can eat it just about any way it's cooked. I'm just thankful **broccoli** hasn't been included in the list of responsibilities!

P.O. Box 5651, Ashville, NC 28803.

The Importance of Preaching

The Preacher—A View from a Pew

By Rita Watson

IT SEEMED LIKE A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT—the view of the preacher from the pew—but it was far more complicated. I thought of the differing views of the role of the preacher. I thought of the 50 preachers and over 5,000 sermons I have heard. I thought of the things a preacher does besides preach. I thought of how he can become our "paid Christian"—or our scapegoat. I thought of how women view preachers as opposed to how men may view them. I thought of the biblical admonitions to the young preachers, Timothy and Titus.

There was an article in each of those thoughts, but the thought that kept nagging at my heart was this one: No one has the ability to touch the life of a small congregation like the local preacher.

The preacher touches us in many visible ways. He is there from the birthing room to the deathbed. He starts us on our journey in married life. He is there when it comes to an end. He is there when we become a new creation. He is our counselor in times of confusion, our parent correcting us when we are in error, and our neighbor giving us a helping hand when we need one.

He Colors Our Attitudes

But the preacher also affects us in ways that we don't often realize. We become like those with whom we spend time, and as a church, we see and hear more of the preacher than any other member of the congregation.

Hence, our attitudes as a church can be colored by the preacher even if we don't consciously intend it. If he is a true student of the Word, then as a congregation we tend to spend more time in the Word. Pages turn when he cites Scripture. Deeper questions are asked in class. If, however, his lessons are not well prepared, if it is obvious that he spends little time in the Word, then the congregation feels no obligation to spend time there. Bibles are not brought to services, our attitude toward the Word is being shaped by his.

If he is community minded, we find the congregation "doing good to all men," but if he feels that the church is exclusive of the community, the congregation will be more likely to fail to reach out to others. If he loves people, then we find ourselves more accepting of others, more compassionate, and more understanding. However, if he is critical of others, complaining often, then the congregation, too, tends to take on an air of quarrelsomeness.

The preacher also affects our personal faith. When we leave his classes, we can be encouraged and bolstered against the wiles of the Evil One. We can see the faithfulness of God in our daily lives. Or, we can feel degraded and humiliated, thinking we can never be what we should be. We can feel the hopelessness of being left to make it on our own power. Exposure to a constant negative attitude wears on us, dragging us down out of the light and into the darkness of despair. Yet, consistent encouragement draws our souls to the God of hope.

He Represents Us

An almost invisible way that the preacher affects us is that he represents the congregation to the community. How he conducts his life tells our community what kind of people make up the church. In a small community, nothing is secret. Mere acquaintances know where you attend church services and they will have an image of what the church is like. The preacher is probably the most prominent member of the congregation and the community will see the church as it sees him. This greatly affects our evangelistic efforts with our neighbors and associates. If he is a positive force in the community people will willingly come with us to services, but if he has a bad report with outsiders, then our neighbors have no desire to join us in worship.

Our evangelism is affected in another way. Webster's says that a preacher is "one who gives moral and religious advice, often in a tiresome way." He might have a point. Sometimes the message can't be heard for the manner in which it is delivered. God chose to call the preacher by the Greek word "kerux," which means "proclaimer" and God chose to call His message "Good News." If he proclaims the Gospel as good news, then we are willingly evangelistic. He causes us to feel that we can joyfully bring our neighbors and friends to services. We reach out to others because we know that what will be heard within our assemblies will be a source of encouragement. He may, however, preach in such a way that we become unwilling to share his messages with others. We fear that what might be said will close the doors that have just been opened. We shy away from asking others to be a part of our congregation because we have nothing there we want to share.

Some Conclusions

Where does all of this leave me? It leaves me with three more thoughts. First, a thought for the shepherd's staff. Peter admonishes elders to feed the flock (1 Pet. 5:2). This places a heavy burden on the leaders of congregations to make sure that the men they choose to stand in the pulpits are men of good report with outsiders and whose attitudes glorify God and strengthen the body.

Second, a thought for the pulpit. James says that those who teach will be judged with a stricter judgment (James 3:1). Preachers have chosen not only to proclaim the Good News, but to take on the burden of being responsible for how they affect those they teach. That means they must walk carefully in the Light so they cause no one to stumble. They must constantly watch that their attitudes be in accordance with God's will. They must proclaim Good News in a way that nurtures the body.

Third, a thought for the pew. In the final analysis, we all shall give an account of ourselves to God (Rom. 14:12). We need to be alert to the influence of those with whom we spend time. We need to make decisions that will bring others to the Light—that are pleasing to God and spiritually healthy for ourselves. Sometimes those decisions will require us to make attitude and action adjustments on our part, and then sometimes we may be required to separate ourselves from an unhealthy situation. Not all who fill a pulpit proclaim God's word.

No matter what our thoughts are concerning the preacher, we must all be careful in our lives, for our enemy, the Devil, is stalking about seeking to devour us, whether we stand in the pulpit or sit in the pew.

903 Oak Street, Marion, NC 28752.

The Preacher's Wife

By Jim Mullican

I HAVE ONE. MOST OTHER PREACHERS do, too. None of the preachers' wives whom I asked would agree to write an article on this subject, however, and that in itself tells a truth which many other Christians may overlook.

The preacher's wife often feels vulnerable and insecure. She wants a home of her own, just like any other wife, yet most churches find it cheaper to provide a parsonage than to pay enough for the preacher to buy a house which suits him and his family. Thus at retirement, the church owns a house, most of its members own a house, but the preacher and his wife do not.

The preacher's wife knows that at any time she may be forced to move to a new location, uprooting her children, leaving her friends, and resigning from her own job if she is employed, because her husband has no employment security.

She knows that more is expected of her than of other Christian women. Others may choose not to teach a Bible class, but she is expected to be a teacher. Only certain areas of employment are acceptable for her. She may be a school teacher, a nurse, or a secretary. To be a waitress, a maid, or a motel clerk may be acceptable for any other woman, but not generally for the preacher's wife. Some churches insist she not work at all.

As a young single man, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two I dated one young Christian lady pretty steadily. When I decided to preach at age twenty-two, she told me she could never marry a preacher because it seemed the preacher and his wife lived in a glass house. Everyone was always watching. How accurate her assessment was may vary from one congregation to another.

Charles Hodge tells of a preacher being interviewed by a church. He was asked whether his wife would teach, handle ladies' Bible class, visit, and other things. He asked, "Are you going to hire her too?" (*You Preacher* [Fort Worth: Star Bible Publications, 1972], 57). They didn't hire him, either.

Probably a real preacher's wife would have included other points in this article, and have have been less negative, but after twenty-three years as a preacher, I have known many preachers and their wives. I believe most preacher's wives would like to be treated just like any other Christian woman—no more and no less, and I'm glad to say that more congregations seem to be doing that.

Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

DILLON, SC...Thomas Eaves from Cookeville, TN will be conducting a meeting on May 21–25. The theme for the meeting will be "What Does the Bible Say?" Weeknight services will begin at 8:00. FLORENCE, SC...The Gregg Avenue Church of Christ announces its Fortieth Anniversary with a Homecoming Celebration, May 27–28. Harold Scott of Knoxville, TN will be the guest speaker. Harold was the congregation's first minister. All friends and former members are asked to contact the church for further information at PO Box 956, Florence, SC 29503, or call (803) 662-1281.

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL., 37, NO. 6 JUNE 1995

How do you measure success?
To laugh often and much;
To win the respect of intelligent people and
the affection of children;
To earn the appreciation of honest critics
and endure the betrayal of false friends;
To appreciate beauty;
To find the best in others;
To leave the world a bit better whether by
a healthy child,
a redeemed social condition,
or a job well done;
To know even one other life has breathed
because you lived—
This is to have succeeded.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Carolina Christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
EDITORIAL & PUBLICATION STAFF
Johnny R. Melton, Editor
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
Jim Mullican, Associate Editor
Michael Mobley, News Editor
Tim Sensing, Book Review Editor

CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Road, Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: individual—$8/year ($15/2 years and $22/3 years); club of five or more—$7.50 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles—50¢/copy/month, or church mailing list (minimum 15) 60¢/copy/month.

Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes with Form 3579 to:
Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Address editorial matter to:
Johnny R. Melton
3305 12th Ave. Pl., SE
Conover, NC 28613-9609

Address news items to:
Michael Mobley
301 Reed Creek Road
Mooresville, NC 28115

Address commercial advertising inquiries to:
Jacobs List, Inc.
PO Box 120
Clinton, SC 29325

Address all advertisng pertaining to the churches of Christ or its members (including related organizations) to the editor.

All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 10.

Order from Carolina Christian Bookstore, PO Box 1219, Yadkinville, NC 27055 (1-800-343-1081, Monday—Friday, 9:00—6:00).

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

WHEN JOB'S LIFE WAS TURNED UPside down by calamity his friends assumed that he was guilty of horrible sin. Their theodicy declared that pain is the punishment for sin. Theodicy is the theological term for the defense of God's goodness and omnipotence in view of the existence of evil.

Jesus' own disciples shared the theodicy of Job's friends. You remember their question to Jesus when they encountered a man born blind. They asked the Lord, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Tragedy must be explained in terms of direct association with sin.

It may be natural for those who believe in the omnipotence of God to adopt that kind of theodicy. After all, it is a bit of a conundrum: God is omnipotent, God is omnibenevolent, Evil exists. The atheist argues that all three of those statements cannot be true. The theist argues that they are true and that the apparent contradiction is resolved by understanding the nature of evil. One of the explanations for evil, or pain, is the one hit upon by Job's friends and Jesus' disciples. Since God is all powerful and sovereign whatever happens He wills to happen. God must have a reason for allowing, or for producing, the pain and suffering in the world. Since God's enemy is sin and God is determined to punish sin, pain must be punishment for sin. If you suffer then you have sinned. It's that simple. Suffering is *prima facie* evidence that one has sinned.

That actually sounds like it may be true. It's reasonable. Until we begin to talk about the babies. You remember the song, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"? It goes, "He's got you and me, brother, in His hands. He's got you and me, sister, in His hands. He's got the whole world in His hands. He's got the mamas and the daddies in His hands. He's got the little, bitty babies in His hands. He's got the whole world in His hands."

Somehow that song just doesn't fit the picture of firefighter Chris Fields cradling the bloodied body of one-year-and-one-day-old Baylee Almon. You know the picture. It's the heart-rending photograph plastered on the cover of *Newsweek* and on nearly every other magazine and newspaper in the country. It has been shown on television until it was seared in our minds. That tragic photograph has become the icon that will forever symbolize the horrible tragedy that struck at 9:04 A.M. in Oklahoma City on April 19.

I wonder, was Baylee Almon a worse sinner than anyone else in Oklahoma City? Does her death stand as God's righteous judgment against her. Were the 167 victims of the bombing worse sinners than anyone else in Oklahoma? Someone might venture to speculate about some of those 167. In an effort to make sense of the tragedy, Randy Woods told a *New York Times* reporter, "Grown-ups, you know, they deserve a lot of the stuff they get." But Randy Woods could not apply that same logic to the children. He continued, "But why the children? What did the children ever do to anybody?"

> "...was Baylee Almon a worse sinner than anyone else in Oklahoma City?"

I ask again, were the victims of the bombing, especially the children, were they greater sinners than anyone else? I imagine that there are some whose emotions are stirred right about now. Some may consider such questions to be insensitive. Some may even think it is bad taste to bring up the issue of someone's pain and suffering in this way. However, I'm in good company when I use a current example of tragedy to teach a spiritual lesson.

On one occasion some folks brought a news item to the attention of Jesus. Luke describes it like this: "Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices" (Luke 13:1).

Can you imagine the horror? A group of Galilean Jews at worship. Offering their sacrifices as God had commanded and as they worship, Pilate's thugs slaughter them. And in a horribly brutal act of sacrilege, the blood of the slain worshipers is mixed with the blood of the sacrifices on the altar.

How did Jesus react to this outrage? Did He condemn Pilate and his forces for their brutality? No. Did He express disbelief and pour out His heart and sympathy for these victims? No. What Jesus did was to put a hard question to His audience.

"Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this way?" (Luke 13:2). You see, my question regarding Baylee Almon is based exactly on Jesus' question about a current event in His day.

Jesus challenged His hearers to reflect not on why did the tragedy happen to those Galileans, but why didn't it happen to everyone else. And He didn't stop there. He brought up another incident to add weight to His point. He asked, "Or those eighteen who died when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?" (Luke 13:4).

In 1992 Hurricane Andrew blew through South Florida and left at least 180,000 people without homes. 63,000 homes were destroyed. Twenty-five people died. Were the people of Homestead, Florida more wicked than any others in Florida?

On May 19, 1995 a band of thunderstorms ravaged the country from Mississippi to Maryland with high winds and tornados. Fifty or more tornados touched down in Tennessee. Three people were killed in Ethridge, a small village 70 miles southwest of Nashville. Were those people greater sinners than anyone else in Tennessee?

I suspect that the reason why there are controversies over the subject of grace has to do with the fact that grace has been domesticated—we understand it—we have even come to expect it.

Jesus' answer to His own questions challenges conventional theodicy. The conventional approach answers "Yes, suffering is punishment for sin. The more serious the suffering, the greater the sin."

Jesus denied it. "I tell you, no!" (Luke 13:3) and again, "I tell you, no!" (Luke 13:5). The Lord was emphatic. The question is not why do bad things happen to others, the question should be why do bad things not happen to me? The reason that we have come to routinely ask the wrong question is due to our failure to appreciate grace.

One of the church's all-time favorite hymns is "Amazing Grace." John Newton, converted slavetrader, wrote that song. But I wonder if we are really *amazed* by grace. I don't believe we are. As a matter of fact, I suspect that the reason why there are controversies over the subject of grace has to do with the fact that grace has been domesticated—we understand it—we have even come to expect it.

R. C. Sproul tells a story that illustrates how easily human nature becomes accustomed to grace. In one of his first teaching assignments, Professor Sproul required three papers. His instructions were explicit: the first paper would be due at noon on September 30, the second paper would be due on October 30, and the final paper would be due on November 30. According to Professor Sproul on September 30 225 students presented papers at the appropriate time. Twenty-five students—freshmen—had failed to complete the assignment. The stipulated penalty for failure to hand in a paper on time was an F. The students begged for an extension. They wanted grace. Sproul relented and granted the extension, but with a warning to have the next paper completed on time.

When October 30 rolled around, 200 students turned in their papers at noon. Fifty students were in the hall cowering in fear. They began to plead for an extension, and once more Professor Sproul relented and granted the extension. But he insisted that the November 30 deadline be observed. According to Sproul, when the paper came due thirty days later, "150 students came into the classroom with their papers prepared, while the other 100 came in as casual, as cavalier, as you can imagine. They didn't have their papers, but they weren't worried in the slightest."

When asked about their papers, the students responded, "Prof, don't worry about it. We'll have them for you in a couple of days. No sweat!"

What happened next wasn't pretty. Professor Sproul took out his grade book and began calling names and asking for papers. "Johnson, where's your term paper?"

"I don't have it, Professor," he replied. So Sproul marked an F in the grade book.

"Greenwood, where's your paper?"

"I don't have it, Sir." Another F.

Sproul asked, "What do you think was the response of those students?" He answered, "Unmitigated fury. In one voice they called out, 'That's not fair!'" So Professor Sproul, not wanting to be unfair, or unjust, turned to Johnson and said, "Did I hear you say that's not fair?" When Johnson replied in the affirmative, Sproul asked him if he wanted justice. Johnson said yes.

Professor Sproul said, "Okay. If I recall, you were late the last time, weren't you?"

Johnson said yes.

Sproul responded, "Okay, I'll go back and change that grade to an F." And he did. Then he asked, "Is there anybody else who wants justice?" It seems nobody else wanted justice.

Do you see how easy it is to become accustomed to grace? The first time a few students begged for mercy; the second time, more students, but they were still begging. But by the third deadline, the students not only were assuming that mercy would be extended, they demanded it. They assumed that because the professor had extended mercy previously, he was obligated to continue to be merciful.

Isn't that how we are with God? Haven't we grown accustomed to grace? But it is not just modern men and women who have become accustomed to grace. Peter warned folks in the first century, "First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this "coming" he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.' But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him" (2 Pet. 3:3–15).

We have grown accustomed to God's grace. We don't appreciate the fact that God's patience is for our salvation. Tragedies should always drive us to an awareness that this old world continues to stand because the Lord delays His coming in order to give us all time to repent!

The following three articles were submitted by Paul Watson. Paul serves the Cole Mill Road church in Durham, NC as an elder and as the pulpit minister. These articles are transcripts of presentations made at the church's 50th Anniversary celebration on July 2, 1994.

The Endurance of the Faithful

By Bob Jones

THE UNDERLYING THEME OF OUR 50th anniversary celebration has clearly been the endurance of the faithful. Endurance despite the problems within the church and about the church that are with us today and were with the early Christians.

The writer of Hebrews was speaking to people who had run the race but were getting tired. In Hebrews 11 he draws their attention to the list of the faithful, those great names that evoke the concept of faith. He then makes a transition in Hebrews 12, where he talks about us. These faithful were all commended for their faith yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. These faithful folks need us as we stand on their shoulder to see the completion of God's plan. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Heb. 12:1–3). This cloud of witnesses is comprised of those folks in the Old Testament that we loved to hear about when we were kids. But this cloud of witnesses also includes all the faithful from the writing of this letter forward. Those great saints whose stories stir us. They include those departed saints in your family. Your early Bible teachers who have now gone on and joined that great cloud of witnesses are watching us even now from eternity. They include witnesses from our own congregation as we see Cary Woods' empty pew; but Cary is with us as a witness. As are the Edwards and the Davenports and Evelyn Brown and David Young and Angie Matson. They are there because we are coming now into the stadium ending the marathon of our Christian race; and they want us to win. They are cheering us on. They want us to put aside that old sin and the things that hinder us and run with perseverance.

But, where are we going? We're going to a mountain. The reading continues that we don't come to that mountain of fear that Moses knew where the law was given. Instead, "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" (Heb. 12:22–24). Our destination is sure for us even while we run, for Scripture says you"have come." This is no common place. It is a heavenly mountain named Zion, city of the living God, home to innumerable happy angels, all spirits of the righteous with names written in heaven, and judged perfect by God because of the blood of Jesus. It is this knowledge of having received a kingdom that cannot be shaken that calls us to endure the race and continue to worship God with reverence and awe.

Let us meditate together before we pray. As we meditate together, let us consider our individual pilgrimage to our common mountain. Let us first visualize our sins and hindrances so we can wrap them up and lay them aside. List and bag every sin and place it behind you. As we will soon pray for God's forgiveness, He will see this bag no more and neither should we. Hindrances, too, need bagging. Identify those anxieties, burdens and doubts that hinder your endurance. These often cannot be totally left but Christ has promised to lighten this backpack full of burdens.

Now look around our mountain to see in the cloud those witnesses that are special to you. Remember their faithfulness and the warmth of their love for our Father. Enjoy their presence with you on this mountain that exists in both time and eternity. As you recall the blessed dead in the Lord, remember those blessed still residing in time but even now being made perfect by the blood of the lamb. Some sit beside you, some are within these walls, some are distant in space but near in Spirit. As you remember, time touches eternity, and death, though real, has lost its sting. Together now with all names ever written or to be written, in God's book, let us now look up the mountain as Moses did. Our first response, as it was for Moses, is fear. We then see on the right hand of the majestic One the Son on whom our eyes have been fixed during our pilgrim race. We remember that His blood permits us to come boldly to God's throne and in the strong and mighty name of Jesus we pray. O God your power, wisdom and might fill us with awe and your love, mercy and grace draw us near to say, "we love you." Because of the blood of your only beloved Son, cleanse us of our sins and make us feel at home here with all your saints on this holy mountain, the present and eternal dwelling of all the faithful. As you have led us kindly in the past, lead us wherever we may best serve you, but as you lead, may none of us ever stray until we can together, without the loss os one, be counted eternally with the faithful in your presence. Amen.

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Imperfect People in the Perfect Church

By Dene Haugland

THE PERFECT CHURCH! I LOVE IT. IT has endured half-a-century, thousands of miles of separation. When I look at this I say, "yes, I see the Church perfect." But it is not always this way. As I look at the church as a whole, as I look at Christianity as a whole and the churches as a whole, I see one of the biggest problems we face is that of division.

It is something that has happened here at Cole Mill Road. We have been through division, through a split in years past. I dare say that each one of us has been involved in some way with division within a congregation, with a split within a congregation. It seems to affect the church so much all over this country. All over the world. We see Christians trying to serve God and yet not being able to get along with one another.

Now, this is nothing new. It is not a 20th-century problem. I think it is a problem that has existed in the church for a long time. We find Paul saying in 1 Corinthians 1:10–13 "I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?" You notice that Paul didn't say, "OK, all those of Paul go to the eastern part of town and start a congregation there. All of you of Cephas go to the Western part of town and start a congregation there. Paul will go to the South and we'll start a congregation there."

No, he told them to work out their problems, not run away from them and separate from one another. In chapter 12, Paul builds them up by telling them how important each member is to the whole. Even though they are different parts of the Body of Christ (different talents, different levels of skill), Paul tells them to let these parts work together. Then he brings them, and us, to the beautiful 13th chapter, the chapter where he talks about love. We talk about how wonderful that chapter is; but you notice the emphasis that Paul puts on how meaningless love is if we don't act lovingly toward one another. For some, this chapter seems to mean we should love those who feel the same way we do but not to love those who don't feel the same way we do. This is what causes division.

Whenever you think about divisions and splits in churches, you usually cannot put your finger on one big thing that caused the division. When you think back, you really can't remember exactly what the problem was. It is a lot of little things, how large a classroom should be, what the order of our worship services should be, who likes the preacher and who doesn't like the preacher. You hear a lot of gossip. You see a lot of back-biting. You get a lot of false accusations. What it really boils down to is a lack of love for one another. We all like to feel like we have something a little special that others do not have. Such attitudes can be the downfall of a church. Perhaps we are suffering from the imperfection of being perfect. By that I mean, we think of the church as being perfect, and well we should. Christ died for the church. Christ established the church and all its glory. Yet it seems we tend to think of ourselves as being perfect because the church is perfect. Anyone who has been through division and who knows how sad and how heart-wrenching that is, realizes that we are imperfect people in the perfect church. We have to work through these issues. Before we can really love one another, we have to understand God's love for us and how much God truly loves us.

If I asked you, "What do you think about when you think of God's love?", most of us would say that He sent Jesus Christ His Son to this earth to die for us. That is so true; and that is the ultimate of His love. But I think we need to expand that answer even more as we look at Jesus' life to see how Jesus conducted Himself. With whom did Jesus spend His time? The woman at the well. The woman caught in adultery. Tax collectors. Jesus chose fishermen; and others like them to carry on His work after He was gone. He didn't go to the Pharisees who were supposed to be the most righteous, who had all the answers. He went to those people that He knew would have a pure heart. People who knew they were sinners; knew they were not perfect; knew they needed a savior. Those are the people He went to.

One other example of Jesus' life of love is His prayer in John 17. It is a beautiful prayer in the upper room on the night that His ordeal of the crucifixion would begin. He prayed for many different persons. He prayed for His disciples, that no harm come to them and that they remain true and faithful. He asked that God continue to watch over them so that none of them would be lost. He prayed for us. For those who would come after them because of their words. In verse 20 he says, "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." One of His last requests was that we get along. That the church must be united. I think we've blown it. I think we've really disappointed God, and denied Jesus' last request, because of our own pride. Because of our imperfection of being perfect. I feel we have really disappointed

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God by not getting along when that is exactly what He has asked us to do. He has given us a reason why: So that people will know that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ. You want to know why the Word is not being spread more? Why our missions fail? It may be because we're not united in that. We're too busy fighting amongst ourselves over things we have no business fighting over. We have gotten away from the core of what our faith is all about, and that is Christ crucified. That is what draws us together as brothers and sisters. We always need to remember that.

Jesus taught us how to love. Jesus had the power to love. Jesus had the power to forgive sins. He has given you and me these same powers. The power to love, the power to forgive sins. We cannot forgive sins the same way that Jesus forgives sins but we have the power to forgive our brothers and sisters when they sin against us. It is not easy to do, but it is something that we are commanded to do. We take the commandments very seriously when it comes to obeying Him in other ways that we feel are very important, yet the commandment to love one another we seem to take very lightly. We seem to feel obligated to love only those with whom we agree, and not those with whom we disagree. That's not what He said when He commanded us to love.

We need one another. I don't think we realize how important we are to one another. I need you. I need you to help me with my faith. I need you to encourage me when I'm weak. I need you to build me up when I'm down. I need you to be there when I'm in sadness. I need you to rejoice with me when I'm rejoicing. And, hopefully, I can do the same for you. That is what we have seen this weekend. Probably none of us have even thought about the disagreements that we may have had back when we were here. There are differences of opinion, but we have to realize that we still have this common love. My goal in this life is to live eternally with God. That is my main goal, and I'm sure that it's your main goal. I need you to help me get there; we need each other to get there. We each need to realize our own imperfections, and to forgive one another's imperfections.

1 John 4:7–15, 19–21 says, "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God...We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother."

Dene Haugland, 1617 Cole Mill Rd., Church of Christ, Durham NC 27705.

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The Perfect Church in an Imperfect World

By Charles Holton

THE CHURCH IS A DIVINELY INspired, perfect institution set in an all-too-imperfect world. It is an institution that Christ has said He is going to deliver over as His bride at the end of time, pure and perfect. Yet the church is set in a world that is corrupt and filled with sin, unholy in every respect. What is to be the interaction between this perfect church and this imperfect world.

By interesting coincidence, I received in the mail just a few days ago as I was working on my comments for this morning, a mailing from the Herald of Truth. As most of you know, the Herald of Truth is very involved in mass media evangelistic efforts. It has done a great deal of good over many years in bringing many people to Christ through television, radio, and other mass media. The Herald of Truth is very upset right now because there is legislation pending in Congress which will change some of the ground rules for broadcasting. The so-called "Fairness Doctrine" requires (at least according to some interpretations) that if one controversial point of view is presented on the airwaves, an opposing view must be presented free of charge. Some courts have said that this doctrine includes religious ideas. Thus, if you present one set of religious ideas, then you have to provide time for another opposing view as well.

I think that the Herald of Truth is rightly concerned that this doctrine may be applied to mean that when they preach against immorality in the world such as pornography, or whatever it may be, then automatically, they have to guarantee the time for opposite viewpoints—perhaps supporting pornography. So they sent me, as a leader of this congregation, a video tape and a mailing that elaborates on this concern. Included was a poster for the lobby of our building about the issue of religious freedom. They also sent a petition which they encourage our congregation to sign and send to the Chairs of the committees in Congress that are considering this legislation. And they want us to raise funds to support a campaign to oppose this legislation. It is very important. I think they have valid concerns about this legislation. But I think this mailing well illustrates what I want to talk—just for a few minutes—about.

Is it a good idea for us as a church to become involved in something like that? Is it right or wrong according to the Scripture? Is it wise or unwise if we see some latitude in the Scripture?

One point of view which can find very clear support from Scripture is that this is not a good idea. This is not what the church is about. The church by its very definition ("ecclesia") means "the group that is called out"—that is, something separate and apart from the world. The church is described in a number of places as being holy. The word holy means "set apart, different from." Christ referred to us in Matthew 5 as a city set on a hill which can shine its light out attracting other people to it. In other places He uses the analogy of a great feast or a banquet which is being held and people are invited into that banquet. One can say from the Scripture that the picture of the church is one of a separate institution that sends its missionaries or its evangelists out to persuade people to come in and be a part of this institution.

Perhaps the clearest Scripture in this regard is in 1 Peter 2:9–12: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." Peter calls us aliens and strangers in this world. We are separate from the rest of society. You do not see in this paragraph at all a picture of the church integrating into society and influencing society but rather a separate, called-out people who are acting independently by setting an example to society—by going out and calling society to join them, but being separate from them.

We get the same idea in a much more specific way in I Corinthians 6. Paul feels so strongly about the separation of the church from society that he forbids the Corinthian church to take their legal disputes into the pagan courts. He is very critical of them for even considering that they would carry into the governmental system of that time—the Roman court system—their disputes among Christians. Likewise, in the 13th chapter of the Book of Romans, Paul describes very eloquently the role of government. But if you read that chapter in its entirety it is very clear that the government is over here, performing its governmental functions, while Christians are over here, doing their Christian duties. Yes, they are to get along, and they are to be supportive of each other; but it is clear that he sees those as two separate and distinct camps.

Now, let's look at the other point of view for a moment. We can say also, I think accurately, that circumstances have changed in certain ways since the time of the New Testament. The government in New Testament times was a Roman autocracy, with an emperor or a consul at times that ruled the Roman government, where there were no concepts of full participatory democracy as we now understand that system. We have political rights and abilities today that were not present during New Testament times. We may actually go out and be actively involved in governmental policy to bring about change. It might be said that this is a very significant distinction between then and now. We could say now this is a wonderful opportunity for us to cause things to happen in our government and in our society, an opportunity which was not available back in the first century. But should we?

Some good arguments can be made that we should be actively involved. Think for instance about how it was that you came to be a Christian. Think how much the factor of the environment in which you were raised caused you to become a Christian. Would not most people here say, "yes, my environment, the situation conducive to teaching me about Christianity, played a very important part?" Then think how that environment came to be. Think about this nation and the principles on which this nation was founded, including the principle of religious freedom that the Herald of Truth emphasizes so greatly. People worked through the political process to cause that to be the case. That was not necessarily the case in the nations from which they came, where there were kings and not nearly the democratic participation that was established here. Think about the fact that it is the very freedoms that were politically won which allowed Christianity, particularly Restoration Christianity in the 1800's, to grow and prosper in this country. Think about what a debt we as Christians today owe to those political actions by people in the 1700's to establish and maintain a nation where those religious freedoms were safeguarded and protected. I think you can come away from these thoughts with a valid idea that yes, it is important and valuable for Christians to work through a political process at least to safeguard and insure certain basic liberties and principles.

A second reason for Christians to be actively involved in government is the tremendous opportunity to make society today a better place. We are rightly concerned today about the tremendous decline in public morality: The breakdown of families. Sexual immorality that is pervasive in our media pervasive in our entertainment sources. The violence that we see on television and the violence that we see acted out in society. We are rightfully concerned as Christians about these things. We want to do something about them; and we have the means, if we want to use those means, to do something about them, again, through our governmental processes it is a very tantalizing temptation to step in and get involved in the governmental process to cause some of these things to change for the better.

A third reason has been well-described in a book that we talked about in one of our classes a few weeks ago written by Richard Neuhaus. The book is called *The Naked Public Square*. The very title of the book goes to the idea of the public square where you used to have nativity scenes before they were banned by the courts as being religious observations. Now there's nothing in the public square at Christmas time; it is "naked." The theme of the book is "who rightly can stand in the public square to cause things to happen in government?" Some say that religion should not be involved in the public square; others would say that religion has every right to be there along with other points of view that pervade in society. But the point that Neuhausmakes very forcefully is that if people who have strong, appropriate moral convictions do not get involved in that public debate and public process of making policy (where everybody else is...the secular humanists, religious radicals, etc.) we are abandoning the field of play to allow everyone else to make their points. Let me read for just a moment what he has to say in that regard. "Politics is an inescapably moral enterprise.

"Those who participate in it are, whether they know it or not, whether they admit it or not, moral actors. The word moral here does not mean that what happens in politics is always morally approvable or in accord with what is right. It means only that the questions engaged are questions that have to do with what is right or wrong, good or evil. In other words, the debate that goes on about many of our laws is truly a moral debate that has to do with issues of right and wrong. Whatever moral dignity politics may possess depends upon its being a process of contention and compromise among moral actors, not simply a process of accommodation among individuals in pursuit of their interests. The conflict in American public life today then is not a conflict between morality and secularism. It is a conflict of moralities in which one moral system calls itself secular and insists that the other do likewise as the price of admission to the public arena." You see what Neuhausis saying there. Some would want to define the public debate as between those who are religious, who have a particular moral stance; and those who are secular, who are not pushing any one moral view. But Newhaus' point is those who are secular are themselves advocating a form of morality as well. And so everybody involved in the debate is involved in a discussion of morality.

It just depends on which position you are coming from. He would say that it is very much the role of the church to be involved in that debate, for if we are not heard, these other voices will prevail.

Nevertheless there are some pitfalls with regard to the church becoming involved in this way. The first one that comes to mind is that many of the issues that are debated are ones where there is no clear, scriptural guideline that gives us one firm answer as to what is right or wrong. We might raise the subject of abortion, which is a hot political and religious issue. We might raise the subject of wars, particularly ones that have been controversial in the last few years. Many other issues may come to mind where one can see a great danger to the church in trying to take a position. Where there is no direct scriptural teaching, there is great potential for dividing and splitting the church.

Secondly, there is the risk to the church, as it gets involved in a political process, of essentially dirtying its hands. Politics by definition is compromise, making deals, taking less than what you absolutely believe is right so as to arrive at accommodation. It is making alliances with people who believe quite differently from what you believe, thus creating a working coalition so as to get a majority of votes. The old saw "Politics creates strange bedfellows" is very much a concern for the church when it gets involved in the political process.

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Finally, and in my mind the most compelling concern, is to recognize that when the church gets involved in the political process the church is essentially resorting to force rather than persuasion. The laws that are passed by our governmental entities are backed up by criminal penalties, such as imprisonment or fines. I believe there is a very serious concern as to whether or not it is proper for the church to force people to adhere to certain modes of conduct by the power of law rather than the power of persuasion.

So we have two positions. One of non-involvement versus one of active involvement. I think we can see very strong pros and cons to each position. One compromise idea might be to say that the church, as an institution, will not be involved in this process, but individual Christians can and should be involved. That may be the answer for many of us. I believe that it is ultimately unwise and improper for the church as an institution to get involved in the political process. But I believe very strongly, on the other hand, that there are many important and significant opportunities for each of us, as individual Christians, to be active in shaping the politics of our nation.

Charles Holton, 1617 Cole Mill Rd., Church of Christ, Durham NC 27705.

Helping Ex-Boston Movement Brethren

By John and Marina Greenwood

THE BOSTON MOVEMENT (NOW called the International Churches of Christ) is starting to fall apart—praise God! But tragically, most who leave it are so devastated by their experiences and so twisted in their thinking about God and about church that when they leave it, they quit seeking truth and fellowship. We want to share briefly from our own experiences, now that we have been out of the Boston Movement for three years and have healed, recovered, re-established our convictions from personal Bible study, and been part of the body again.

Space limits the degree of specifics that can be shared, but we hope that sharing our perspective will help members of churches of Christ in the Carolinas to become more prepared to “leave the ninety-nine...and go to look for the one that wandered off...your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost” (Matt. 18:12–14). We benefitted from old friends at Friendly Avenue showing their desire to help, and were drawn back into the fold mostly because they sought us out and made us feel loved and welcomed just as we were.

We had an advantage over most members of the Movement in that neither of us was converted by what eventually developed into the Movement, the seeds of which can be seen in hindsight in the campus ministries of those sent out from the Crossroads congregation in the 1970s. We chose to move to Raleigh to participate in the campus ministry of Wyndham Shaw which was already underway. John was trained by Wyndham in campus ministry and was hired by Friendly Avenue in 1978. We can trace the development over the years from when there was a strong emphasis on serious Bible study, close relationships that were chosen and evangelism that was from the heart, to what is now an authoritarian, hierarchical, legalistic, shallow, and performance-based system that is the opposite of scriptural teaching and example in heart, doctrine, and practice in very foundational areas.

It is humiliating to look back and realize how, like frogs in a pot of cold water on a fire, we were gradually being “cooked” without being aware of it. We had allowed ourselves to be led astray, which is crushing to realize, especially since we had a strong foundation of Bible knowledge. But that foundation is what eventually prompted us to face our doubts, questions, and disagreements and led to our escape when several bad experiences confirmed our concerns. Most of the members of the Movement or experience of biblical fellowship to fall back on, and they leave the Movement doubting that there really is a church out there that meets their spiritual needs.

There are two ways to get out of the Movement. The first is by choice. When we left it was because we were unwilling to compromise or submit to leaders in circumstances that would have violated our consciences and because we had to face the fact that we weren't and couldn't be unified on teachings and practices regarding how the body is to function. We praise God for putting the circumstances in our lives that forced us to have to take a stand, though sadly a non-Christian friend was put in the middle. We pulled out with the intention of studying through our questions, confident that we would go back if we could come to our own convictions that the Movement was biblically sound. It didn't take long to conclude that it wasn't, and the amazing thing was to see how one error had led to another and the whole thing seemed to unravel as we searched for the "bottom line" starting point for the errors. So we knew we could never go back, and began the recovery process to put the past in perspective and figure out where to go spiritually from there.

The other way to leave that is common now is to be forced out, after having a "repentance talk" where higher-ups analyze and judge one's heart and require repentance of the sins one is accused of before being allowed to be part of the Movement church, usually referred to as "sitting out." The "sin" is defined as lack of wholeheartedness in following the (now-claimed-to-be-"God-anointed") leaders, which is now rebuked as "insolence" and likened by Kip McKean to Korah's rebellion against Moses. This is backfiring, thank God, and many who sit out stay out because they once again begin thinking for themselves and acting from responsibility for themselves, which is suppressed by the Movement.

As you can probably tell, we believe that the Boston Movement/International Churches of Christ is a cult. It is the most insidious cult there is, because, though so much is taught and practiced that is biblically wrong, we do believe that God does know its members as His children, who have come to Him in faith and have been immersed for the forgiveness of their sins upon repentance and confession of Jesus as Lord. Though their preparation for baptism goes beyond spiritual definitions, it does not negate or invalidate their conversion. Sadly, they usually don't know at conversion that their commitment to and faith in God will quickly be turned into commitment to and faith in the Movement, which in practice means entrusting themselves to and obeying their leaders. They don't realize that their sincerity and humility will be preyed upon by wolves in sheep's clothing and that they will be led astray.

Members of churches of Christ need to understand the schemes of Satan being used against these brethren and be ready to rescue them when possible—be ready to bind the wounds and nurse them back to spiritual health when they are found dashed on the rocks of the abuses by the Movement. How to do that? From our own experience, we know that what is needed at first is a listening ear to give the wounded sheep the opportunity to "dump"—to vent all the hurts, anger, and frustrations and to experience for the first time that their feelings are valid, real, and important, since "stuffing" feelings becomes a necessary habit in the Movement to avoid rebukes and in an effort to be humble and submissive; disagreements are judged sinful and prideful. Just getting the feelings out is like lancing a boil, and eventually the festering will be replaced by the healing process, at a different pace and in a different way in each person. If we hadn't had each other to "dump" on, we wonder if we'd have held on to our faith. There are many, probably most, who aren't as fortunate to have a partner to count on as we did with each other. Because of the humiliation and shame of realizing one chose the wrong people to trust, it is hard to trust anyone again, so ex-Movement members would find it nearly impossible to initiate any depth of relationships, even if they are brave enough or have enough conviction to visit other churches of Christ. But if they are shown genuine interest in their spiritual well-being and are invited to share their experiences with someone who

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wants to be a real friend, at their own pace, and with plenty of opportunities being offered, we believe many who still have even a tiny mustard-seed of faith will be drawn back into the biblical body of Christ.

Friendship must be primarily one-on-one, though group opportunities can be an additional source of support and recovery in cities where there are significant numbers of members leaving a Movement church (now referred to as "the church in [*city name*]"). When one leaves the Movement, one's closest friends are suddenly gone, and though abuses and barriers may have been part of one's "discipling relationships," the desire for and promise of deep friendships is one of the main reasons most are drawn to the Movement in the first place, and the need is legitimate. If members of churches of Christ don't provide that, experience is showing that many ex-Movement members are joining denominational and non-denominational groups where the biblical principles regarding fellowship seem to exist; doctrinal accuracy is a secondary issue at this point because they are so confused about what was true and what was false in the teachings of the Movement. They won't be ready to be helped to sort out their biblical convictions until they experience relationships where trust is earned rather than expected as it was in the Movement. They must feel they are accepted just as they are and be encouraged to take time to process their feelings and experiences and to sort out their own convictions attained by their own study as opposed to the pronouncements and opinions of the hierarchy of the Movement.

Eventually, with time, patience, honesty with self, God, and others, and the opportunity to experience truly unconditional love, grace, and acceptance by God's family, many straying, or lost, or abused sheep can be rescued, healed, and restored to the flock. They can once again become active disciples of Jesus and servants of the body when they find a place to experience grace, freedom, encouragement to act from their own convictions, and truly unconditional love. Now is a crucial time for our brotherhood to focus on the needs of those leaving the Boston Movement, because the number leaving either equals or exceeds the number joining. As the hierarchy of the Movement demands more and more of its members in a vain attempt to keep the numbers up, more and more are leaving on their own, or are unable to measure up and are being kicked out. Many more would leave if they believed there was a better place to go. Our approach must be, as Paul's was in trying to draw the Israelites to Christ, to "make much of our ministry in the hope that we may somehow arouse our own people to envy and save some of them" (Rom. 11:13,14). We need to be confident that God's better way is worth making much of in an attempt to draw ex-Movement members to the "life to the full" (John 10:10), "life that is life indeed" (1 Tim. 6:19).

John and Marina Greenwood were at Brooks Avenue in Raleigh 1975–1978, at Friendly Avenue in Greensboro working in campus ministry 1978–1983, and as members 1983–1986, in Charlotte at Northview/Metro Charlotte 1986–1990 in various leadership roles before and after the takeover by the Boston Movement, back in Greensboro in 1990, commuted to the Triangle congregation of the Boston Movement until 1992, then returned to Friendly Avenue. They recently moved to Maryland/D.C. area to return to ministry with the Greenbelt Church of Christ.

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Fearing Nothing

By Rita Watson

THERE ARE A FEW PASSAGES IN THE Bible that speak solely to the female soul. 1 Peter 3:1–6 is one of these. "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear." (NIV)

This is a passage we often study. We study about submission to our husbands. We study about conducting our lives modestly and with respect for our husbands. We study about adorning ourselves with a meek and quiet spirit. But the phrase that speaks so directly to the soul of the woman and the one we so seldom study is, "And you are now (Sarah's) true daughters if you do what is right and *let nothing terrify you.*" (RSV)

Terrified? Of what could Sarah, married to Abraham, prophet, friend of Yahweh, father of the faithful, possibly be terrified? Let's take a quick glimpse at Sarah's life with Abraham.

Ur of Chaldees. A highly developed city, where the average middle–class family had a two–story, 15 room house and servants to care for it. Ur, where the school system was top–notch, teaching the three R's plus some. A major city with a bustling commerce. And Abraham wants to pack up and take the family camping!

Afraid? Who's afraid? He doesn't know where he's going. He doesn't even know for how long. And the accommodations. Tents aren't bad. Lot's of ventilation during sand storms and so much ease for those creepy crawly things to come and go. And the acoustics are wonderful if you want everyone outside to know what is being said inside.

So they want to move to "the South" away from the malls, shopping centers and the local Samuel's club. Of course, there's a famine. Afraid? Who's afraid? I mean, what's to eat? How are they going to feed themselves, not to mention the 300-plus people they brought along. Oh, yeah, Abraham moves the whole crew to Egypt to escape the famine and Sarah finds herself in Pharaoh's harem. (Hello! Anyone worried yet?) Of course, Abraham is doing okay. He has Pharaoh loading on the gifts because Sarah is so good looking.

Then later on, Abraham goes off to war taking his 318 servants and leaving Sarah back at the oasis wondering if she will ever see him again. Will he be killed? Her grief could overwhelm her in just thinking about it. And if he doesn't come back, what is she going to do? How will she manage? She has no son to take care of her and nephew Lot is being held captive and may not make it. Can she depend on the servants not to desert her? (Does any of this sound familiar?)

Let's not forget about Abimelech's harem. You would think once in a lifetime would be enough, but Sarah found herself in the same situation twice. And then there was that fateful day when Abraham said, "I'm taking the boy and we are going on a journey to worship Yahweh." Do you suppose Sarah noticed the concern in Abraham's eyes? Did she see the split wood being put on the donkey? Did she notice the absence of a lamb? Was she afraid as the days passed by? How many hours were spent in the tent door watching for their return?

When a woman marries she is placing her life and well–being into the keeping of another human being. She hands over the right to the final say in the major decisions of her own life. She submits her life to her husband's care.

It's a fearful thing to give your life to another human being. One who is prone to make mistakes. One whose pride can get in the way. One who can be self–centered at times. It takes faith to place your life in the control of another and not be terrified at points along the path of life, because as human beings we really want to control our own destinies. Sarah lived 127 years. She had plenty of opportunity in her life to not only be worried and afraid, but to be out and out terrified. How did Sarah let nothing terrify her?

Maybe it was because the God of Abraham was also the God of Sarah. Her trust, her faith, was placed first in Yahweh. She was of "the holy women in the past who put their hope in God." It was Yahweh who rescued her from the harems of Pharaoh and Abimelech. It was Yahweh who brought Abraham home to her safe. It was Yahweh who gave her Isaac not once, but twice. Sarah could live without terror through the decisions of a mortal lord because she had an Immortal Lord.

Rita Watson may be contacted at 903 Oak Street, Marion, NC 28752.

Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

COLUMBUS, GA...The Edgewood Church of Christ announces that Randy Gore, former Youth Minister with the Aiken Church of Christ, is now Youth Minister for the Edgewood church. Contact Randy at 4102 Macon Road, Columbus, GA 31907; Telephone: (706) 561-3792. LUBBOCK, TX...Stuart Jones, Director of the Senior Adventures in Missions (Senior AIM) program at Sunset International Bible Institute (formerly Sunset School of Preaching), invites older Christians in the Carolinas to consider ministry opportunities with Senior AIM. Jones Writes, "What can older Christians do? Our culture desperately needs role models of mature Christian living. All too often the "heros" of our time are evil people who choose to live ungodly lives and respond to life's challenges in ungodly ways. Godly role models will be needed more and more as our country moves ever farther away from God." Among other things He suggests the following services Seniors can perform: "Older Christians can teach younger Christians how to cope with life and the trials that come. They can use Scripture to demonstrate how to cope and overcome. Older Christians can mentor younger Christians and give them some opportunities that may not come unless an older Christian provides such. Older Christians can assist young congregations develop a spirit of evangelism and outreach while simultaneously growing in love and respect for one another within the congregation. Older Christians can develop good friends among Christians of other cultures. And, they can develop friendships among peoples of other cultures in anticipation of their becoming Christians. Older Christians can help one another deal with loss, change, ill health, and social adjustments, Because they may share some of the same weaknesses and problems, they can be of great help to one another. Older Christians can get involved in local community activities in such a way that they benefit their neighbors while giving the church a good name. Older Christians can work in such areas as World Bible School. They can visit their pupils and gain first hand experience working with someone who is striving for truth. Older Christians can teach younger people how to use what they have to make a better life for themselves and their children." Jones invites Senior Christians to contact Sunset International Bible Institute, 3723 34th Street, Lubbock, Texas 79410 to discuss ways they can work with Sunset to make their lives meaningful and fulfilled. BLACK MOUNTAIN, NC...The 45th Annual Blue Ridge Encampment will be held June 19–23, 1995 at the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly, Black Mountain, NC. Jim Mankin, Executive Director, said, "This will be one of our very best programs, for we are featuring men who are known to be church builders." For reservations, write to Mr. and Mrs. J. Wallace Johnson, 1720 Verde Trail, Dothan, AL 36303. STATESVILLE, NC...The Northview Church of Christ announces its Fourth Annual Youth Rally with Full Access, August 11–13. More details will be announced later. MOCKSVILLE, NC...Carolina Bible Camp announces that November 13–15 have been set aside as CBC Days at Food Lion. CBC & Retreat Center will be eligible for 5% of the purchases made at Food Lion stores by those participate in the program. For more information contact Judy or Elizabeth Swicegood, 1662 Jericho Church Road, Mocksville, NC 27028. The CBC Fun Fair is scheduled for September 23, 1995. Not only will there be food and games, but there will also be crafts for sale and an auction. Contact Randall Burton for more information (RR 2 Box 5158, Mt. Gilead, NC 27306; Telephone: (910) 439-5353).

Send news items to Michael R. Mobley, 301 Reed Creek Road, Mooresville, NC 28115.

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VOL., 37, NO. 6 JULY 1995

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Praise the LORD, all you nations;
extol him, all you peoples.
For great is his love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the LORD
endures forever.

Praise the LORD.

—Psalm 117

Carolina Christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
EDITORIAL & PUBLICATION STAFF
Johnny R. Melton, Editor
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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Road, Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: individual—$8/year ($15/2 years and $22/3 years); club of five or more—$7.50 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles—50¢/copy/month, or church mailing list (minimum 15) 60¢/copy/month.

Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes with Form 3579 to:
Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Address editorial matter to:
Johnny R. Melton
3305 12th Ave. Pl., SE
Conover, NC 28613-9609

Address news items to:
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Mooresville, NC 28115

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Address all advertisng pertaining to the churches of Christ or its members (including related organizations) to the editor.

All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 10.

Order from Carolina Christian Bookstore, PO Box 1219, Yadkinville, NC 27055 (1-800-343-1081, Monday—Friday, 9:00—6:00).

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This issue of *Carolina Christian* on the Psalms has been prepared by Dr. Paul Watson. Paul is a well qualified Old Testament scholar whose capabilities are recognized across the country. He serves the Cole Mill Road church as an elder as well as preacher. For two years he has served on my Editorial Board. The articles that follow should whet one's appetite for reading the Psalms. Tim Sensing provides a strategy for using the Psalms for devotional reflection. Bob Broadus, Sue Warner, Michael Claxton, and Carol Shoun provide devotional reflections on individual Psalms. An article on Psalm 1 by James Meadows, a member of our Board of Directors, rounds out the study.

"Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise. Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Let all the people say, 'Amen!' Praise the LORD."

—Ps. 106:47–48

"For it is written in the book of Psalms..." (Acts 1:20)

The Psalms and Our Christian Faith

By Paul Watson

"IT IS NO ACCIDENT THAT OF ALL THE books of the Old Testament, the Psalter [book of Psalms] has always been found the most relevant." While such judgments as this one by Karl Barth are always open to discussion, what is beyond dispute is the fact that the Psalms are, or should be, of immense value to us and to our Christian faith. Elsewhere in this issue of Carolina Christian a number of writers will give their reflective response to specific Psalms, thus illustrating how we can draw meaning from these ancient hymns and prayers even today. This article will look more broadly at the Psalms and some of the ways they can inform and shape our faith.

The Importance of the Psalms for Israel and the Church

"[E]verything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled." These words of Jesus in Luke 24:44 remind us of the significant location of the Psalms in the earliest canon of Scripture. Whereas in most English versions the Psalms are the second book of poetry (after Job), in the Hebrew Bible, which both Jews and first-century Christians used, the Psalms began the third major section (following "Torah" and "Prophets") which was also called "Writings" and which contained the last 13 books (as we count them) of the Old Testament.

Even more importantly, Jesus' words remind us that the Psalms point us to Him—His life, His message, His Father, His own Lordship, and His followers. Along with the prophet Isaiah, the book of Psalms is the most frequently quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament. The Psalms informed both the corporate worship (1 Cor. 14:26) and the private devotion (James 5:13) of the earliest Christians. Still today the Psalms, more than any other portion of Scripture, has been the basis for Christian songs and hymns, as a glance at the index of any songbook will show.

Having noted all of this, it must also be said that members of the churches of Christ are generally unfamiliar with the Psalms. Apart from a few obvious exceptions, such as Psalms 1 and 23 or such verses as “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me” or “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105), the Psalms are unfamiliar territory for many of us.

Why is this so? It may be because of their form; i.e., because they are poetry. Yet they are not “dense” or obscure, like so much modern poetry. In fact, as many modern translations will show, their basic poetic structure—a series of two-line units linked together in various ways—is both simple and obvious. Their metaphors are universal: sheep (Ps. 95:2), songs (Ps. 98:1), summer heat (Ps. 32:4), a mother’s womb (Ps. 139:13), deep water and floods (Ps. 69:2). A good introduction to the Psalms should help overcome any remaining uneasiness about the poetic form of the Psalms.

Our unfamiliarity with the Psalms may also stem from our more general unfamiliarity with the Old Testament. If so, we should remind ourselves that “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable...” (2 Tim. 3:16); this certainly includes the Psalms. A third reason for our unfamiliarity with the Psalms may stem from the fact that, unlike many Catholic and Protestant churches, our worship is non-liturgical and thus does not make much overt use of the Psalms. Yet, as was suggested earlier, a look at the Scripture index in any songbook will show just how many of the hymns we now sing were inspired by a Psalm in whole or in part.

As we become more familiar with the Psalms, in public and private study as well as in public worship, we will find the Psalms enriching our faith in a number of ways. In the rest of this article we will focus on three of those ways.

"Enthroned on the praises of Israel" (Ps. 22:3)

THE PSALMS TEACH US TO WORSHIP. The Hebrew name for the book of Psalms is *Tehillim*, which means “praises.” The last word of the Psalter is the related word “hallelujah,” which means “praise Jahweh (Jehovah; the Lord).” Some 30–40% of the psalms are either Thanksgiving songs (e.g., Ps. 107) or hymns (e.g., Ps. 148). The movement of the whole collection is from petition (Pss. 3–7) to praise (Pss. 145–150).

All of this should direct our own hearts and minds to the praise of God. Unfortunately, in some places today, our congregations are caught up in a “worship controversy” that focuses on technical aspects of worship—shall we use printed songbooks or a screen and overhead projector?—to the neglect of both purpose and content. The Psalms can help us get back on track by reminding us of whom, why, and how to worship.

Take Psalm 150 as an example. This final doxology (“glory-word”), like a popular television quiz-show, gives us the answers to a series of questions we should be asking about worship. “Where should we worship God?” (v. 1): Both in God’s special place of worship (“sanctuary”) and everywhere in the whole wide world (under God’s “firmament”; Gen. 1:6). “Why should we worship God?” (v. 2): Because of what He has done (“mighty deeds”) and who He is (“exceeding greatness”). “How should we worship God?” (vv.3–5): Exuberantly; enthusiastically; completely. “Who should worship God?” (v.6): Every living creature.

The fundamental question—“whom should we worship”—is answered by the initial and final "Hallelujah" ("praise the Lord") of Psalm 150, and by every other hymn and Thanksgiving psalm as well. All of which is a way of keeping us straight about who the Ultimate Reality truly is, and a way for us to confess our acceptance of the First Commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart/soul/might" (Deut. 6:5; Mark 12:2a).

One other aspect of these hymns and Thanksgivings that should not be overlooked is this: Such praise of God is also an evangelical witness to the world: "Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all people!" (Ps. 117:1). God is not our private possession, but the Lord who rules over all time and space. When we praise Him as such, we invite others to join us in that praise.

"Out of the depths I cry to Thee" (Ps. 130:1)

THE PSALMS TEACH US TO PRAY. There are even more psalms of prayer and petition than there are hymns and Thanksgivings—approximately 45%. These psalms are often called "laments" because they focus on the desperate, life-threatening situations in which the worshippers find themselves. Sometimes they are written in the first person singular ("I," e.g. Pss. 22, 130); sometimes, in the first person plural ("we," e.g. Pss. 74, 125). The crisis may vary, from sickness to drought to attack by "enemies"; but the plea is always the same: "Lord, deliver me/us." Furthermore, while the situation is intensely, even embarrassingly, personal, it is never private: it is always shared with God and God's people (e.g., Ps. 22:22–26).

Surprisingly, perhaps, the "laments" follow a fairly standard pattern (although not all laments exhibit each and every element of the pattern). This pattern or structure includes six basic elements: an address to God (Pss. 74:1–3; 22:1–2); a description of the problem (Pss. 22:6–8, 12–18; 74:4–11); a confession of trust in God (Pss. 74:12–17; 22:3–5, 9–11); a plea for help (Pss. 74:18–23; 22:19–21); words of assurance that the prayer will be answered (Pss. 22:27–31; 12:5); and a vow to praise God and proclaim His deliverance (Pss. 22:22–26; 6:8–10).

One special kind of lament is the prayer for forgiveness of sin. Psalms 32, 51 and 130 are outstanding examples of this type. Such prayer-psalms as these remind us of the deadly consequences of unacknowledged, unforgiven sin ("when I declared not my sin, my body wasted away," Ps. 32:3); that all sin is ultimately a violation of our relationship with God ("Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned," Ps. 51:4); and that forgiveness is only possible with God ("There is forgiveness with Thee," Ps. 130:4; cf. v.7). Furthermore, such forgiveness should lead to both a changed life ("put a new and right spirit within me", Ps. 51:10) and a joyful acknowledgment of God's grace ("my tongue will sing aloud of Thy deliverance," Ps. 51:14).

It is sometimes asked how these intensely personal prayers made by worshippers to God can, at the same time, be inspired words from God to all of us. B.W. Anderson (paraphrasing D. Bonhoeffer) answers in this way:

"[T]hese are the prayers God gives us to pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who has brought every human sorrow and joy, every frustration and aspiration before God. If we prayed out of the poverty of the heart, we might pray for only what we want to pray; but God wants our prayer to be much fuller, encompassing not only our own needs but the life of the whole community of God's people. So just as the Lord's Prayer was given in answer to the request, 'Lord, teach us to pray' (Luke 11:1), so the book of Psalms is teaching about how we are to come before God in the proper way."

"Like a tree planted by streams of water..." (Ps. 1:3)

THE PSALMS TEACH US TO THINK AND ACT. The rest of the Psalms—some 15–20% of the total number—differ widely in form and focus. Nevertheless, in their various ways these psalms share with the hymns, Thanksgivings and laments an instructional function. Sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly they invite us to think about our life with God, and with one another, and to act accordingly.

For example, Psalms 78, 105, 106 and 136, each in their own way, call us to remember how God has acted in the past, how His people reacted to His actions, and the consequences of their reactions. All of this should be instructive for us, as the apostle Paul suggests in 1 Corinthians 10:11. Psalm 78:5–7 specifically enjoins the teaching of God's acts from generation to generation "so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments."

Psalm 1, and others like it (e.g. Pss. 19:7–14 and 119), direct our attention to God's "Torah", God's "instructions/directions/guidance" for life ["law" is an inadequate translation of "torah"]. There are essentially two courses a person may take in life. One is directed toward God, through God's "Torah" (v.2); the other, away from God and toward the "wicked/sinners/scoffers" (v.1). The former way leads to stability, productivity, longevity (v.3). The latter course leads to just the opposite. A life so unanchored that a puff of wind can disperse it: "of the chaff there is nothing to say except that the wind drives it away. That is all there is to chaff" (Patrick Miller).

Psalm 15 links right conduct to acceptable worship. "O Lord, who shall sojourn in thy tent / dwell on thy holy hill?" reminds us that it is God's presence (whether in tabernacle or temple) into which we are summoned and that we come, not as those who deserve to be there, but as "resident aliens" who must accept God's invitation and depend on God's hospitality. Verses 2–5, so similar to such prophetic passages as Hosea 4:1–4 and Micah 6:1–8, give the answer: Only those striving to live in covenant relationship with both God and fellow man shall be admitted to God's presence. Jesus, of course, will reinforce this great truth: "You tithe mint, and dill and cummin, but have neglected the weightier matters of the law—justice and mercy and faith..." (Matt. 23:23; cf. 5:23–24; 7:21–23; 25:31–46).

Life can also be difficult at times, both to understand and to live; and the Psalms know this. Psalm 73 is a good example. People (vv. 4–12) who live the very opposite way commended by Psalm 15:2–5 still appear not only to survive but to prosper. Overcome with a sense of injustice, and with some envious self-interest too (vv.1–3), the psalmist is ready to give up his faith (vv.13–14) until he reaches a double turning-point: his obligation to the next generation (v.15) and his experience in worship (vv.16–17). Now the matters become clear. All life—not only the immediate present—is lived before God (vv.18–26). Psalm 1 is correct: The apparent "success" of the wicked is illusory and temporary (vv.18–20). Psalm 23 is also correct: God's providential care as Shepherd and abundant generosity as Host are unending. Thus, the last word of Psalm 73, Psalm 150, as well as Psalm 32, and Psalm 22, is a word of evangelical praise: "But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all thy works" (v.28). Let that be the final word of our hearts and lives as well.

Paul Watson, Cole Mill Rd Church of Christ, 1617 Cole Mill Road Durham, NC 27705.

"For it is written in the book of Psalms..." (Acts 1:20)

Devotions in the Psalms

By Tim Sensing

SACRED SCRIPTURE IS GOD'S vehicle to carry His divine voice to our hearts. God speaks; we listen. We recognize the character of God as we see God acting in history. We hear the will of God proclaimed in its pages. The Bible is inspired revelation. Within our inspired text, some Scriptures are written from the human perspective and are directed heavenward. The primary example is the Psalms. David and some others are writing from their hearts to God in song and in prayer.

The Psalms not only reflect an individual's private devotions but also reflect the devotions of the entire community. Within the Psalms a wide range of emotions are expressed including confession, thanksgiving, lament, praise, anger, confusion, and intercession. Praise is used two ways: Praise recognizes God for who He is. Praise is also a response to God's goodness. Furthermore, praise is an intentional determination to see life differently. We praise with the eyes of faith focused from God's perspective.

Today, the Church needs to restore singing the Psalms of the Church. From these Scriptures we learn the language of worship. Over time, our community will be shaped and changed by our worship. If our worship is anthropocentric (human-centered), we will reflect American individualism and privatism that counters the gospel on many fronts. A mystic or pietistic use of the Psalms that treats the text more like a "self-help" book will influence our reading and subsequently our worship. However, if our worship is theocentric (God-centered), then worship will form our community so that we will reflect the image of Christ.

Long ago, a brother taught me how to worship through the Psalms in private devotions. Each day five Psalms are read along with one chapter of Proverbs. By the end of the month, both books will have been read in their entirety. By the end of the year, each book will have been read twelve times. Combining this reading with prayer that is prompted by the Scripture, the heart of the worshipper will be transformed.

Allow the language of the Psalms to become your worship language. Participate with the Psalmist in lament, praise, thanksgiving, confession, or intercession.

For example: In Psalm 1 David writes, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night."

The Psalm prompts me to ask for God's blessing of protection from those who would lead me astray. I pray that God will give me a heart that delights in His Word and hungers and thirsts for righteousness. I continue reading the Psalm. A few verses later, my heart is prompted to pray again. Each month, different verses will connect with my circumstances prompting me to pray about various aspects of my life. Sometimes I will stop and pray every verse. Sometimes I will read ten or twenty verses before I pray. God is setting the table for my spiritual meal. God is setting the agenda for my devotional life.

David Worley (“Sing Where the Bible Sings,” **Christian Studies** 13, 1993) mentions interpsalm interpretation. Although this methodology is more complex, Worley advises reading the Psalms in groups of three (e.g., on Monday, read Psalms 1, 2, 3; Tuesday, read Psalms 2, 3, 4; Wednesday, read Psalms 3, 4, 5; etc.). This allows the individual Psalm to be kept in context as arranged by the canon rather than rearranging them according to theme, form, or genre.

May your own private devotions be richer as God transforms you into the image of His Son. Let us all be more sensitive to the song book of Scripture as we worship our God.

Allow the language of the Psalms to become your worship language. Participate with the Psalmist in lament, praise, thanksgiving, confession, or intercession.

Dr. Tim Sensing, P.O. Box 1861, Mebane Street Church of Christ, Burlington NC 27216-1861.

“For it is written in the book of Psalms...” (Acts 1:20)

Psalm 12

By Michael Claxton

“HELP, LORD, FOR THE GODLY are no more; the faithful have vanished from among men. Everyone lies to his neighbor; their flattering lips speak with deception. May the Lord cut off all flattering lips and every boastful tongue that says, “Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise,” says the Lord. I will protect them from those who malign them.” And the words of the Lord are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times. O Lord, you will keep us safe and protect us from such people forever. The wicked freely strut about when what is vile is honored among men” (Ps. 12).

Like many timeless passages in the Bible, this psalm has a contemporary ring that strikes the reader of 1995 as clearly and sharply as it must have struck the first listeners. The verses describe our world accurately as they describe David’s, for they call attention to those same aspects of human arrogance and wickedness which God has always despised. In every corrupt age, the righteous have sympathized with David’s feeling of solitude, and they have continually sought God’s protection when overwhelmed by the sin around them. This psalm speaks to us now because neither the nature of God nor the nature of man has changed. His righteousness remains as far above ours as “the heavens are higher than the earth” (Isa. 55:9).

In the present day though, we may feel that the gap is widening even farther, that our world is at a depth of godlessness unequaled in human history. Witnessing the events of the last half decade, it is tempting to think that man has never been so perverse, so overtly sinful as he is at the present time. While of course there has been no time since David wrote this psalm when the wicked did not "freely strut about" (v. 8), the "strutting" seems now to be more visible, more confident, more brazen than ever before. Sometimes we can't help but think that the faithful really have "vanished from among men (v. 1), since so many people not only continue in sin but now also seem to have discarded the shame that once accompanied a sinful lifestyle. While many of us still struggle daily against sin, others around us proudly display their wicked behavior. The word *strut* describes it perfectly: the sin of the 90's marches in front of us its head held high, chest out, shoulders back forcing itself upon us and daring us to be offended.

Christians must not accept someone else's rules.
Our marching orders come from heaven, not Hollywood,
Washington DC, or Wall Street.

Consider these depressing examples: Prime-time network television now allows programs with violent or sexual content. Daytime television talk shows revel in the perverse lifestyles of their guests, while some of their counterparts on radio thrive on finding new ways to shock listeners. Magazines parade immodesty in some form on nearly every cover, while the media insist upon showing us daily what is ugliest about human behavior. Current music, books, even cartoons must sell themselves with crudeness, sexuality, or angry, spiteful humor. For many young people, premarital sex is now a given instead of a taboo, and college binge-drinking is a weekend contest rather than a sickness. Activists march the streets in defiance of any God who would forbid abortion or homosexuality. Drug dealers control and corrupt entire neighborhoods. Gangs destroy property for entertainment. Terrorists strike seemingly without remorse. Prejudice and bigotry are still flourishing among organized, vocal hate groups who boldly preach their doctrines. And for countless individuals, the holy name of our Lord is nothing more than a common swear word.

Certainly we all realize that the 90's invented none of these sins. However, the decade's major innovation in wickedness has been in giving sin more publicity, in numbing an entire generation to its ugliness. Christians have been so overwhelmed by rampant "in-your-face" sin that we may feel unequipped with the mental or emotional stamina to fight every "fiery dart" we see. Therefore, in order to preserve our sanity, we have raised the limit of what we allow to shock us. Without exactly compromising our standards, we have been forced to "choose our battles," and we have stopped fighting against some things that would have mortified the apostles and early Christians. As a result, the wicked will boast "We will triumph with our tongues" (v. 4) and they receive plenty of press time to do exactly that. By asserting the independence of human will and by rejecting Christianity as "outdated" the enemies of God have set the tone for the entire culture. The entertainment industry has followed suit by bombarding us daily with "flattering lips" which "speak with deception" (v. 2), as our movies, books, music, and TV shows constantly depict sinful actions and lifestyles as attractive and normal.

But Christians must not accept someone else's rules. Our marching orders come from heaven, not Hollywood, Washington DC, or Wall Street. We have the "flawless words of the Lord" (v. 6) which clearly define righteousness and sin and which promise protection for those who are oppressed by the wicked (v. 5). Throughout the Bible God has promised us strength to fight sin; we must trust that as the presence of wickedness increases, our strength to fight it will increase as well. In turn, God expects us to mature to the point that we can fight against a larger, more widespread enemy. While we may feel that the modern change in attitudes toward sin is too radical for us to reverse, we must remember that God has not left us alone. Whenever we are disheartened by the world we see on television, we only look in our churches to find good people still struggling to do what is right. And whenever we are tempted to say with David that "the godly are no more (v. 1), there is comfort in knowing that others have felt that way, too. Abraham couldn't find ten righteous in Sodom (Gen. 18:23–33). Elijah felt that he alone was left of God's followers (1 Kings 19:10). Micah felt that "not one upright man remains" (Mic. 7:1–2). Even Christ felt abandoned by the faithful (Mark 14:37). The important thing is that God has provided us with fellow believers and He has promised to "keep us safe" (Ps. 12:7). Even if we were the only Christians left on earth (which we aren't), and even if all others lost faith (which they haven't), God has promised His guidance, protection, and love. The beautiful portrait which Psalm 12 paints of our Father is just as accurate today as the ugly picture David gives us of sin. It is "the flawless words" of the Lord to which we must listen, the portrait of His everlasting protection on which we must fix our sight.

Michael Claxton, Cole Mill Rd Church of Christ, 1617 Cole Mill Rd, Durham, NC.

"For it is written in the book of Psalms..." (Acts 1:20)

Psalm 133

By Sue Warner

PSALM 133 BEGINS "HOW GOOD and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!" I applied this to my children when they were younger. They had been fussing and I read that to them with the explanation that it applies to brothers and sisters too!—both natural and spiritual. As oil was precious to the priests and yet was not used sparingly, but rather was poured, not merely skinkled a drop or two at a time, so should our love for each other be poured upon one another. With that, how could there not be unity?

I think the "dew of Hermon falling on Mt. Zion" represents that which we have and need for existence being given to another so they may live and have God's blessing. It could be anything from a shoulder to cry on to sharing the gospel with a non-believer, with a myriad of things in between. If more homes had more unity there would be less "dis-unity" in the world. After all, example is the best teacher. Just think, it could radiate outward: home, neighborhood, city, state, country, world. If all had true unity, there would truly be peace.

Sue Warner, Brooks Avenue Church of Christ, 700 Brooks Avenue, Raleigh, NC.

"For it is written in the book of Psalms..." (Acts 1:20)

Psalm 19

By Bob Broadus

THIS PSALM REMINDS US THAT the dominant message of the natural world, overriding all the specific little languages fashioned by humankind, is the glory and majesty of God the Creator, communicated by His "handiwork." Not surprisingly, it is a message that would have had special impact on an observer in the clear atmosphere of the Near East in ancient times, when, without interference caused by the inferior artificial lights made by the creature, one might see far into the sky. Even as late as the sixteenth century A.D., observers such as Tycho Brahe, without the aid of telescopes, could keep track of each star, and quickly spot the appearance of a "new" body or of a different configuration. (A standard biography of Tycho begins with the quotation, "The Heavens declare the glory of God...").

In ancient times, the sun, no doubt because it seemed so much larger, brighter, and more spectacular, naturally attracted more attention than did any other object in the sky; thus the psalmist speaks of the heavens as providing a tabernacle or vast tent under which it could move in its consistent, stately course, day after day.

Our point-of-view, a few millennia later, is somewhat different, following careful investigation coupled with energetic speculation. Estimates of the size of the universe continue to vary, but whether we think in terms of twelve billion or twenty billion light years (or more) has little consequence to faith. How many galaxies are there? A current project seeks to chart fifty million of them, each with billions of stars, some of which are far larger and more luminous than the sun.

Some have said that modern science, positing a universe so much larger and older than once thought, has done a disservice to the religious outlook, tending to remove God farther and farther from humanity. It is even suggested that we may have less consciousness of God because the tremendous distances are beyond the power of our minds to comprehend.

Possibly this is the case with some; but can it be seriously contended that the modern view of the size and complexity of the universe is less reverent toward God than were the notions of those overly ambitious men of old who tried to build the tower of Babel, under the impression that they could reach God in the clouds? Does not the magnificent thought that light from distant stars began its journey billions of years ago give greater significance to faith in the "ancient of Days"?

How much greater our wonder, then, than that of a writer of thousands of years ago; and yet how similar our conclusion as to the meaning of this basic message of the universe. Furthermore, we may both say, with the apostle Paul, that "The God who made the world and everything in it...did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:24–28, NIV)

Bob Broadus, Cole Mill Road Church of Christ, 1617 Cole Mill Rd., Durham, NC

Psalm 84

By Carol Shoun

"HOW LOVELY IS YOUR dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God" (Ps. 84:1–2).

What a beautiful expression of longing to be in the presence of God! We can only imagine how it must have felt to be able to enter the courts of God's physical dwelling. For this psalmist, the intensity of feeling, spiritual, emotional, even physical was overwhelming.

Many scholars believe that this psalm speaks of pilgrimage to the annual Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. Christians don't have the luxury of an annual physical connection with God. While we enjoy His constant presence in a spiritual sense, and hold on to the knowledge that His Spirit lives in our hearts, there are nevertheless times when we, like the psalmist, cry out for the day when we will be physically in His presence. In a very real sense, then, we join the Israelites of old on a life-long pilgrimage to His dwelling place. Let's allow them to teach us, through this psalm, about faithful pilgrimage.

"Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage (v. 5).

Where are the hearts of the pilgrims? Although yearning profoundly for the destination, they have set their hearts on the pilgrimage or the journey. Too often, we press determinedly through our days on the way to our goals, dismissing the things that happen along the way as distractions. Our focus is on the product, not the process; we allow the small moments of each day to pass unnoticed as we reach for the big Moments of arrival that we believe will bring us happiness and a sense of security. We spend our days determinedly "on our way," and then find that we have arrived at a place that feels empty.

But the psalmist seems to understand that a life of faith is the journey itself. It is living *in,* and growing through, each moment as it happens. Our eyes are on the Destination, but our hearts remain focused on each step of the journey. Our identity as pilgrims comes from what we are as we take each small step. And some of those steps are not easy:

As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength till each appears before God in Zion. Hear my prayer, O Lord God Almighty; listen to me, O God of Jacob (vv. 6–8).

The Valley of Baca is thought to be a symbolic reference, as there is no known valley of that name in the Holy Land. Pilgrims on their way to the mid-October Feast of Tabernacles would be traveling through a land scorched by the summer's lack of rain, and hot sirocco winds. The trip would surely involve hardship; indeed, the

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root of the word Baca means "to weep," hence the frequent interpretation *valley of weeping.* Yet somehow, as they pass through the parched valley of weeping, the pilgrims are able to "make it a place of springs." Is it possible that, drawing upon their strength that is in God (v. 5), they grow through the adversity so that their own tears become like springs?

As distant as it may seem to us, the day of appearance before God will come. On that day, our understanding of the enormity of God's loving provision and protection as we have traveled will be made perfect.

We understand God's promise to us of spiritual growth and maturity through trial, but sometimes our vision is so clouded by the tears of today that we cannot see the hope of tomorrow. Perhaps we can infer that at those times it is okay for us to pause, allowing the tears to become springs that will then strengthen us, before we move on. In the words of Ardis Whitman: "There are times when it is hard to believe in the future, when we are temporarily just not brave enough. When this happens, concentrate on the present...Look forward to the beauty of the next moment, the next hour...the likelihood that tonight the stars will shine and tomorrow the sun will shine. Sink roots into the present until the strength grows to think about tomorrow."

God did not leave His children to rely solely on springs of their own making. He was attentive to their prayer. Toward the end of their journey, the pilgrims would encounter the advent of Palestine's rainy season, which begins in mid-October with the *early* or *autumn rains,* occurring often as a series of thunderstorms. Direct help from God would come, but not softly packaged.

The presence of hardship on the pilgrims' journey seems to have been neither unexpected nor unwelcome. Certainly, there would be moments when they would feel tired, discouraged, or weak. But the psalmist's words suggest that they held tightly to the times of strength, going "from strength to strength," until each appeared before God. Perhaps that is the rest of their lesson for us. Fully living each moment of our pilgrimage often leaves us feeling hurt or weak, or even afraid. But if we can learn, as the Israelites did, to plant our moments of strength as firm stepping stones on our difficult journey, then we too can go from strength to strength until we each appear before God.

"Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless" (vv. 10–11).

As distant as it may seem to us, the day of appearance before God *will* come. On that day, our understanding of the enormity of God's loving provision and protection as we have traveled will be made perfect. And that day,even if it were to be only one day, will be more than worth the journey.

"O Lord Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you" (v. 12).

Carol Shoun, Cole Mill Rd Church of Christ, 1617 Cole Mill Rd, Durham, NC 27705.

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"For it is written in the book of Psalms..." (Acts 1:20)

Psalm 1

By James Meadows

"BLESSED IS THE MAN THAT walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore, the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: the way of the ungodly shall perish."

Psalm 1 needs no title because it is so plain, and because it is itself a preface to all the great matters which follow it. "The sum of this Psalm is that the just and he alone is blessed. It incites us to the love of righteousness by presenting proper hopes. By pointing to the dreadful end of the wicked, it warns us to flee from all iniquity. It is a compound of all the Psalms, and indeed of all Scripture. In many of our Bibles the caption given is, 'The happiness of the godly. The unhappiness of the ungodly'"(W. S. Plummer).

The Righteous

First, "Blessed is the man...." The word *blessed* in Hebrew is plural, denoting the richness of the variety of blessing secured to the righteous. Adam Clarke says it "may be considered as an *exclamation* produced by contemplating the state of that man who has taken God for his portion; O the blessedness of the man!"

Second, the negative characteristics of the righteous are given. (1.) He "walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly" (wicked, ASV). *Walketh* refers to the whole round of activities of one's life or that which one practices. *Counsel* denotes not merely the advice of the wicked, but his aims, his maxims, his principles, and his practices. The "ungodly" or "wicked" are those who have no place in their thoughts and lives for God (Rom. 1:18–28). "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away" (Prov. 4:14, 15). (2.) He does not stand "in the way of sinners." *Sinners* are those who "miss the mark" or "pass over the prohibited limits." The sinner not only does not do good, but he does evil. This man adds outward transgression to the sinfulness of his heart. *To stand* means that one has stopped or loitered around long enough to allow evil to get a grip; it denotes a decaying sensitivity to sin.

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As, to be hated, needs only to be seen;
Yet seen to oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

—Alexander Pope

He sitteth not "in the seat of the scornful" (scoffers, ASV). *Scoffers* are those who scorn, mock, and deride the truth and sacred things. Peter mentions those who would mock, ridicule, and hold up to scorn the idea of the Lord coming again (2 Pet.

3:1–4). The righteous man deliberately refuses association with people of this type.

"A steady progress is indicated—*walking, standing, sitting*. First, stepping aside from the right path into crooked ways in compliance with evil counsel; secondly, continuing a line of conduct conscience condemns; at last, sitting down at the banquet of sinful pleasure, conscience drugged or seared, God openly despised. A picture of how many lives once bright with hope" (E. R. Condor). Sin usually spirals downward from thought to action. For instance, Achan saw, he coveted, and he took (Josh. 7:21). David looked upon Bathsheba, he desired her, he lay with her, he tried to deceive her husband, he got her husband drunk, and, finally, he had her husband murdered (2 Sam. 11).

Third, the righteous man is described positively under two heads. (1.) "[B]ut his delight is in the law of the Lord." *Delight* means pleasure, desire, a matter in the mind that is acceptable, delightsome, desired. It is from a root word which means "to incline to ... fig. to be pleased with, desire ... (have, take) delight, desire, favor, like" (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*). The righteous man loves the word of God, not only to read, but to follow as the rule of his life. "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119:97). "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6). "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2). (2.) "And in his law doth he meditate day and night." *Meditate* means to "ponder or reflect on, muse over, consider, contemplate" (*Webster's*). "The power of reflection chiefly distinguishes a wise man from a fool.... Without mediation grace never thrives, prayer is languid, praise dull, and religious dues unprofitable" (W. S. Plummer). Meditation on the word of God on the part of the righteous is not an occasional practice, but it is his work day and night. Paul told Timothy to "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.... Meditate upon these things" (1 Tim. 4:13, 15).

Fourth, the four results that follow the way of the righteous are clearly named. (1.) "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water." The words, *rivers of waters*, are sometimes used figuratively (cf., Ps. 119:136; Lam. 3:48); they are used to refer to actual rivers (2 Kings 5:12); and they are used to refer to artificial streams (Prov. 21:1; Deut. 11:10). "The original words properly denote canals or channels, as customary means of artificial irrigation. hence the single tree is said to overhang more than one, because surrounded by them" (Alexander). To be *planted* suggested *permanency* of connection. He shall be rooted, anchored, and steadfast (Col. 2:5–7); he shall be fed and nourished from an unending fountain of rich treasures (cf., John 4:14). (2.) "That bringeth forth his

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fruit in his season." "Those that he planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing" (Ps. 92:13–14). The righteous man will continue to be a vigorous, productive, fruitbearing servant to the Lord all the days of his life. "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8). (3.) "His leaf also shall not wither." What a contrast to the threat of Isaiah against the wicked of his time. "Ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water" (Isa. 1:30). "His *profession* of true religion shall always be regular and unsullied; and his *faith* be ever shown by his works" (Adam Clarke). Just as a tree planted by the "rivers of water" exhibits "all the fragrance and all the beauty of a perpetual spring" so shall it ever be with the righteous man. His life is evergreen. (4.) "And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." This statement contains a general truth or "contains an affirmation as to the natural and proper effect of religion, or of a life of piety" (Albert Barnes). Paul wrote, "for bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). "Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29–30). The phrase *and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper* is sometimes translated "in whatsoever he doeth, he shall prosper," suggesting that the man who delights in God and in God's word, shall prosper, regardless of whether the enterprises in which he invests succeed or fail (cf., Joseph, Gen. 39:1–23).

The Ungodly

First, there is a tremendous difference between the righteous and the ungodly. "The ungodly are not so." In contrast to the righteous the ungodly "walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the way of sinners, sit in the seat of the scornful; their delight is not in the law of the Lord, neither do they meditate in God's word day and night; nor are they like a well watered tree, bringing forth seasonable fruit, and covered with green foliage; and whatsoever they do shall in the end work their shame and overthrow. A sad and utter defeat of all their plans await the ungodly" (W. S. Plumer).

Second, the ungodly are "like the chaff which the wind driveth away." The Hebrew word *chashsh* rendered *chaff* means dry grass or hay. The Hebrew word *mots* refers to the husk of the wheat. "In ancient times it was considered of no value at all, and when corn was winnowed, it was thrown up in the air until the wind had blown all the chaff away" (G. Rowlinson). Chaff is used throughout the Scriptures as an emblem of what is weak and worthless, and as a symbol of the destruction of the wicked (cf., Job 21:18; Ps. 35:5; Isa. 17:13; Matt. 3:12). The "ungodly" or "wicked" are not necessarily gross sinners, as that expression is generally understood, but may be active, religious people who have failed to let the will of God control their lives (Matt. 7:21–23), or they may be people who have buried their talents (Matt. 25:14–30).

Third, the ungodly "shall not stand in the judgment." The word *stand* means to endure or withstand a test. The lives of the wicked are not built on the word of God and the cannot withstand the trials of life (Matt. 7:24–27), but particularly, as this verse probably means, they will not be able to maintain their cause and have any support in the final judgment (Eccles. 12:13–14; 1 Tim. 5:24–25). They will not be found among those acquitted and approved by the Judge of all the earth.

Fourth, the ungodly shall not stand "in the congregation of the righteous." God's people are now dispersed all over the world, but the day is coming when they shall all be *congregated* together; there shall be an eternal separation of God's friends and God's foes (Matt. 25:46). In this life the tares and the wheat grow together (Matt. 13:24–30), and the sheep and goats often herd together (cf., Matt. 25:31–46), but no wickedness shall be in that eternal city (Rev. 21"27). This principle needs to be loved and practiced in the church today (cf., 1 Cor. 5:1–13).

The Lord Knows

First, "the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous." *To know* means to recognize and to approve. God is said to "know" those of whom he approves, and on whom he "lifts up the light of his countenance" (Ps. 4:6). "[O]nly those whom God approves, and loves, as his friends, will be able to stand in the day when the great decision shall be made.... No one can be admitted to the favor of God, and to the rewards of heaven, whose character is not such that it will bear the scrutiny of the Omniscient eye" (Albert Barnes).

Second, "the way of the ungodly shall perish." This is given as the reason why the ungodly shall not be able to stand in the judgment. God does not approve or recognize their ways. The Lord will say to some in the judgment, "I never knew you; depart form me, ye that work iniquity," i.e., I never recognized or approved your way (Matt. 7:23). David was envious and fretful of the wicked's prosperity (Ps. 73:1–3) until he went into the "sanctuary of God; then understood I their end" (Ps. 73:16–17). Let the wicked prepare to meet God, and know their end if they continue in their wicked state (2 Thess. 1:7–9).

James Meadows preaches for the Boiling Springs church. Contact him at 324 Woodsong Dr., Inman, SC 29349.

Wise or Foolish? In or Out?

By Sara Kemp

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS in Matthew 25:1–13 teaches a valuable lesson to Christians today. In our "hurry up" world, it is so easy for religion to become something less than a personal responsibility.

This parable was given during a time when it was the custom of the day for the bridesmaids to go to the home of the bridegroom and then to personally escort him to the home of the bride. They were to take lamps, not only to light the way, if necessary, but also to give an air of festivity to the occasion.

Five of the virgins took enough oil in case the bridegroom was late, which meant they would need extra oil to light the way to the bride's home. The other five apparently only took what they thought was absolutely necessary.

The ten bridesmaids could easily represent church members today. They are all involved in the celebration. They all have great respect and awe for the bridegroom who is Christ. It seems, though, that half of them did as little as they thought was necessary. They were counting on the other five who were more than prepared for the occasion. Do we see this today? Do we seem to be relying on the dedicated, active members of the church to do our work for us?

When the bridegroom came, only half the bridesmaids were prepared. The other half were not prepared. They were told that they were "foolish." The closed and they were left behind.

Let's do a little comparison between the ten virgins and church members of today.

Ten Virgins	Church Members Today
They were at the right place	They are in the right church
They had the right lamp	They have the right interpretation of the Bible
They had the oil to light the lamps	They attend worship services on Sunday

When the five foolish virgins ran out of their own oil, they wanted the five wise virgins to share the extra oil with them (Matt. 25:8). We can be church members who are always in our places at worship services, who only carry the approved version of the Bible, but do we depend on the good works of others to carry us through the hard times and eventually into heaven?

Each and every Christian has a personal responsibility to carry the light of the Word. Are we like the five foolish virgins who were in the right place, at the right time, with the right lamps, but who had empty lamps? Let's make sure that we're not foolish enough to think that just because we complete the five acts of worship every Sunday, that our building has the right name on the sign, that we sing in the right way, that we don't give our preachers unscriptural titles, that this means we are pleasing to God.

Our spiritual power source must be God's Word and each one of us is personally responsible for keeping his/her own spiritual lamp full. This is accomplished only through Bible Study, prayer, and the personal responsibility of carrying that Light to others on a continual basis.

Where do we each stand? Are we in the group with the five foolish virgins who are doing what is needed to get by? Or, are we in the group with the five wise virgins? Do we continually watch to make sure that our lamps are filled with the oil that is needed as we daily serve God and others?

Sara Kemp worships with the Westside church in Charlotte, NC. Contact her at 131 Devine St., Stanley, NC 28164.

The Man I Want to Be

By Michael R. Mobley

My soul desires to be with my God
and longs for His presence daily.
My heart is devoted to him,
convicted of His principles,
surrendered to His will,
and it beats with His purposes.
My mind is transformed by His truth.
My spirit breathes his life
as it struggles with this life.
My life is molded daily by His saving
grace and compassionate love.
This is the kind of man I want to be,
the kind of life I long to live.

Michael R. Mobley, 301 Reed Creek Rd., Mooresville, NC 28115.

Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

HUNTERSVILLE, NC...The Lake Norman church conducted its first Gospel Meeting July 9–11 with Lowell Altizer of Christiansburg, VA doing the preaching. Brother Altizer has preached the gospel for forty-nine years and is presently engaged in evangelistic work. The Lake Norman church, new work barely thirteen months old, was started by the Northview church in Statesville, NC. For more information regarding this new work in North Mecklenburg County, or if you would like to help in some way, contact Howard Rorrer, 9408 Linwood Dr., Huntersville, NC 28078; (704) 875-2200. STATESVILLE, NC...The Northview church announces its fourth annual youth rally with Full Access, August 11–13, 1995. This year's theme will be "P.A.R.T.Y.—Pray and Rejoice Together, Yes." More details will be forthcoming. MOCKSVILLE, NC...Carolina Bible Camp announces its shopping days at Food Lion for November 13–15. The camp will receive 5% of the total qualifying purchases (less taxes). For more details, contact Judy/Elizabeth Swicegood, 1662 Jericho Church Road, Mocksville, NC 27028.

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VOL. 37, NO. 8 AUGUST 1995

Blessed be the God and Father of our
Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us
in Christ with every spiritual blessing
in the heavenly places,
even as he chose us in him
before the foundation of the world,
that we should be holy
and blameless before him.

—Ephesians 1:3,4

Carolina Christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
EDITORIAL & PUBLICATION STAFF
Johnny R. Melton, Editor
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
Jim Mullican, Associate Editor
Michael Mobley, News Editor
Tim Sensing, Book Review Editor

CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Road, Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: individual—$8/year ($15/2 years and $22/3 years); club of five or more—$7.50 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles—50¢/copy/month, or church mailing list (minimum 15) 60¢/copy/month.

Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes with Form 3579 to:
Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Address editorial matter to:
Johnny R. Melton
3305 12th Ave. Pl., SE
Conover, NC 28613-9609

Address news items to:
Michael Mobley
301 Reed Creek Road
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Address commercial advertising inquiries to:
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Address all advertisng pertaining to the churches of Christ or its members (including related organizations) to the editor.

All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 10.

Order from Carolina Christian Bookstore, PO Box 1219, Yadkinville, NC 27055 (1-800-343-1081, Monday—Friday, 9:00—6:00).

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH faith is not a recent discovery. Paul stated it axiomatically, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8–9). A tension exists between the relationship of grace and faith and faith and works. Ours is not the first generation of the church to recognize that tension and to attempt to balance it.

The following statement comprises an attempt to clarify the issue. Consider it carefully. "In showing that man can and must obey God in order to be saved, *some of us have run to the extreme of making salvation depend on works.* Some have been wont to show that there is a human side and a divine side to salvation, and in doing so they have made the *human coordinate with the divine.* Worse, in the minds of some the *divine* has been completely ruled out and salvation made a matter of human achievement—except that the 'plan' was divinely given. The gospel was made a system of divine laws for human beings to obey and thus save themselves sans grace, sans mercy, sans everything spiritual and divine—except that the 'plan' was in mercy given! Mercy to expect man of his own unaided strength to save himself by meeting the demands of a system of perfect divine laws!

"Such teaching as that makes 'void the grace of God' (Gal. 2:21), perverts the 'gospel of the grace of God' (Acts 20:24), makes Christ's death useless (Gal. 2:21; 3:21), and counts his blood an unholy thing—except as it is reached by a perfect obedience, and then it is not needed!"

Even though this statement could have been written last week regarding the current discussion of grace and works in our brotherhood, it was actually written sixty-two years ago by G. C. Brewer as a part of a review of K. C. Moser's book *The Way of Salvation*. The review appeared in the May 11, 1933 issue of *Gospel Advocate*. Moser's book was originally published in 1932. A reprint edition by Gospel Light Publishing Co. includes Brewer's review on pages 8–12.

Brother Brewer thought that there were some folks in the church in 1933 who had become unbalanced in their theology while attempting to balance the doctrines of grace and works. He did not deny that such brethren talked about grace; he challenged their understanding of the doctrine, arguing that it was, in fact, a misunderstanding. Sixty-two years later Brewer's words are remarkably current. Little has changed. Some brethren still think of grace only in terms of a system of laws, and they define faith to mean absolute obedience to those laws. However, "perfect obedience" by one's "own unaided strength" to "the demands of a system of perfect divine laws" renders grace unnecessary and does violence to the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith.

In this issue of *Carolina Christian* Dennis Conner has brought together articles on the theme "In Christ." These articles provide a balanced reflection on the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith even though, in most cases, they do not address that theme directly. Instead, the articles investigate the blessings *in Christ* highlighted by Paul in Ephesians 1:3–14, but in so doing each author recognizes that it is only through the matchless grace of God that anyone could ever be found *in Christ*.

Must We Think Alike?

Our editorial policy at *Carolina Christian* does not require either the editor or the Board of Directors to agree with every opinion, either explicitly stated, or legitimately implied, in the articles we print. Each article should be read for its own merit, and the views expressed should be understood to be those of the individual authors.

The articles in *Carolina Christian* are offered for study in light of Scripture; they are not intended to be substitutes for personal Bible study. Our authors intend to present the fruit of their own personal study, but they do not presume that their conclusions should be viewed as the final word on a subject. Additionally, our writers assume that they are writing to a biblically literate audience which has sufficient judgment to discern the truth in their articles.

It is not the purpose of *Carolina Christian* to determine orthodox positions and to impose such positions on our readership. Our objective in writing is to call our readers to think about biblical themes and to provide background and context for fruitful reflection. Our attitude is consistent with that articulated by Alexander Campbell in his debate with Rice: "It is not the object of our efforts to make men [or, women—JRM] think alike on a thousand themes. Let them think as they like on any matter of human opinion and upon 'doctrines of religion,' provided only they hold THE HEAD Christ and keep his commandments" (Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, Vol. 2, p. 519).

In Christ

Blessed In Christ

By Dennis Conner

ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE passages in Scripture is Ephesians 1:3–14. The entire section is an ascription of praise to God; it is full of God and the results of His gracious initiative in Christ, and the sense of adoring praise that is evoked. Yes, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

In the original Greek these verses constitute a single, complex sentence that speaks of a treasure trove of riches that are to be found in Christ. The thoughts flow uninterrupted from Paul's heart in a growing crescendo of praise for the blessings of God in Christ. In Christ. Note the phrase, for it is one of Paul's favorites. In the span of these twelve verses the phrase "in Christ" and its equivalent expressions appear no less than eleven times. The sphere within which the saving activity of God takes place is the Lord Jesus Christ. For Paul "in Christ" is more than a catchy religious expression. Rather, it is the locus of spiritual life itself and all that is related to that life. "In Christ" speaks of a relationship that marks the difference between life and lostness. Indeed, as Paul has written, every spiritual blessing is in Christ, and in Ephesians 1:3–14 he identifies some that are the most praise-worthy.

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This issue of *Carolina Christian* is devoted to the blessings that God has bestowed upon us in Christ. Our prayer is that as you read these articles you will be filled with a greater sense of praise and appreciation for what it means to be *in Christ.* ■

Dennis Conner preaches for the church in Yadkinville, NC. He is also Chairman of the Board of Directors of Carolina Christian *Publications, Inc. Contact him at RR 2 Box 304 BB, Dobson, NC 27017.*

* * *

In Christ

Accepted In Christ

By Craig Hinrichs

"TO THE PRAISE OF THE GLORY of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6).

The word translated "accepted" in the KJV is a verb derived from the noun form of the word we commonly translate "grace." It means to endue with special honor. In this context it refers to the special honor bestowed in our adoption as children of God. Rather than being treated as outcasts, we are accepted into God's family. Paul teaches us here that our acceptance is based on God's grace, not our merit or works. There was nothing we could do to render ourselves acceptable to God. The only thing that could enable us to be accepted was the death of Christ in our place. The price was paid. Acceptance is now available for anyone who wants it and is willing to meet God's conditions for its reception.

It is important to understand that meeting God's conditions does not constitute legalism and does not necessarily imply that one is trusting in his own works to save him. Nor does it negate grace or faith. Throughout Scripture salvation, both temporal and eternal, has always been offered by God to those who by faith obey His commands with a view toward receiving accompanying promises. Thus, faith in a certain outcome is always rooted in a promise made by God, and this quite often with accompanying conditions. The motivation for humans to act is faith in God and what He has said, coupled with a desire for His promised outcome.

In the text we are considering, God by His grace has enabled us to be accepted as an adopted child of His by the work of Christ on the cross. He has also told us the conditions for receiving the benefits. If we believe God and desire to be accepted, we will meet the conditions. Our confidence will then be in the promises of God as we act on what He has said. Those missing the grace of God will be those who either don't want it or do not believe what God says about how to receive it.

The only thing that could enable us to be accepted was the death of Christ in our place. The price was paid. Acceptance is now available for anyone who wants it and is willing to meet God's conditions for its reception.

What are the stipulations God has set forth for those who desire to receive His grace and become accepted by Him? A study of Ephesians 2 shows that we enter the realm of God's gracious acceptance when He reconciles us to Himself in the body of Christ. According to Ephesians 1:22–23 the body of Christ is the church, of which Christ is the head. From Ephesians 4:4 and 5:23 we learn that there is just one church, or body, that the Lord promises to save. This church is comprised of those who have been saved in the manner revealed by God in His word. God Himself adds to the church those who have submitted to His will (Acts 2:22–47).

For those who have been added to the body of Christ, the New Testament gives instructions to individuals and churches as to what they must do to remain in the body. Without getting into specifics, there are laws and commands that must be obeyed by any person wishing to be saved by the grace of God (Heb. 5:9, 8:10). The epistles contain instructions and commands we are to follow (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Cor. 14:37). Consequently, there is a pattern of behavior with resultant divine traditions for individuals and

(Continued on page 9)

Redeemed In Christ

By Carl Etchison

I WAS KNOWN AS THE "COUPON KING" among the college brothers. They accused me of never paying full price for anything. My roommate, however, thought using coupons was "distasteful." He would say, "It impresses a date to pay full price!" When he announced his wedding plans, I asked him how he could afford it. He told me, "I've been saving coupons! Paying full price impresses a girl on dates, but you don't have to do that anymore after you're married." Well, whatever you think of either philosophy, it seems that mankind has had even more of a struggle with understanding something's *value* than in accepting its *price*. I believe this was also true in Paul's day, and it seems to be one of the issues he addresses in his letter to the Ephesians in chapter 1:3–14. Let's look at the concept of redemption found in verse seven.

What is the value of redemption? Do we only evaluate its cost? What is the worth of something when it is redeemed? I am sure that by now you have noticed that it seems to be worth more to some people than others. Still, how can we determine redemption's true value?

Let me use some of my coupons to illustrate this point. I have a coupon for 50¢ off Maxwell House Colombian coffee. If you look closely at the fine print at the bottom, you will see that the actual cash value of this coupon is 1/20 of one cent. But if I redeem it, it will be worth 1,000 times that amount! So what is its true value? I also have a coupon for $1.00 off Nescafe instant coffee. The fine print says that the actual cash value of this one is 1/100 of one cent. If I redeem this one, it will be worth 10,000 times that amount! So what is its true value? In addition, some stores will double or even triple coupons on special days. That would make this coupon worth even more, would it not? Well, not if you do not happen to like coffee. I also have a coupon for $2.00 off a Disney Video Movie. The actual cash value on this one says 2/1,000 of one cent. That is not very much value. It is hard to believe, but if I redeem this one it will be worth 100,000 times more. Whether you use coupons or not, I think you will see that their face value is practically worthless, but if you redeem them, their value is increased many times over. So, something's face value may be based upon its material or physical worth. However, its redeemable value is determined by what it is worth to someone else. The same thing is true as it relates to our redemption through Jesus. Our face value may be of little or no worth, but our redeemable value is truly priceless!

In examining this concept further, there is some help to be found in the definition of the word "redeemed." It means to release or to deliver over after paying a specified ransom amount. It may also mean to recover or transfer ownership by means of payment or purchase. I find it more helpful to focus in on what God has redeemed us from, and then what He has redeemed us for. What has God redeemed us *from*? Two things, primarily: Our sins and ourselves.

First, God offers to redeem us from *our sins*. This includes not only the penalty for sin, but the power of sin as well. We are released from the punishment that is the normal consequence of disobeying God. And we are freed from the guilt and bondage that is associated with giving in to sin's mastery. We usually don't like to talk about sin very much because it makes us feel uncomfortable. We may as well get used to talking about it because that subject seems to be pretty important to God! Also, if we fail to understand our own sinfulness, then how can we appreciate our forgiveness? If we fail to realize what it means to be lost, then how can we appreciate what it means to be saved? Without appreciating the benefits of forgiveness and salvation, redemption would have very little value. Jesus told Simon the Pharisee that "he loves little who has been forgiven little." Could it be that we, like others before us, have become "nearsighted and blind and have forgotten that we have been cleansed from our past sins" (2 Peter 1:9)? Being nearsighted can be worse than being blind. It can give us such a dim and distorted view of the way things really are.

Our face value may be of little or no worth, but our redeemable value is truly priceless!

Second, God offers to redeem us from *ourselves.* This may sound a little strange at first, but this is definitely something we need to be saved from. Jesus said in John 10:10 that he came to give us a "full" or "abundant" life. In order to do this we have to clear out some space in order to make room for the Lord in our lives. The Lord Himself told His followers that "if anyone would come after me he must deny himself." We do not seem to have any problem understanding what it meant for Peter to have denied Jesus three times, but when it comes to denying ourselves, that can be another matter altogether. The concept of self–denial often seems too difficult to comprehend, as well as too abstract a principle to apply. Yet, oddly enough it was Peter himself who would later write that "the way of life that was handed down to us by our forefathers" was "empty" or "futile" (1 Pet. 1:18). God wants to redeem us from that emptiness and give us a life that is really living! He offers us a full and abundant life in both quality and quantity.

Now, what has God redeemed us *for*? Again, two things: His glory and Himself.

First, God seeks to redeem us for *His glory.* Man was originally created to glorify God, and when man failed to do that, he had to take up residence elsewhere. God is still trying to get mankind to fulfill the purpose for which he was created. Peter said in 1 Peter 2:9–12 that God chose us to declare His praises and live such good lives that others would see it and glorify God. Jesus taught that our lives were to shine like a light in the world to bring glory to God. The whole of our lives is to honor and praise the Lord, doing everything in a way that glorifies Him (Col. 3:17). When we try to live righteously and do things that are good, it is important that others learn that doing the Lord's will is the motive behind our actions. Otherwise, we will tend to seek and receive the credit for ourselves. Even as Christians working together, our unity is to give a message to the world that glorifies God. We all have more influence than we realize. It is up to us to determine the type of influence we will have on the lives of those around us. God wants us to always remember that we are to live our lives for Him, so that He will be glorified in us.

Second, God seeks to redeem us for *Himself.* I have always marveled at the idea that God wants us to be a part of His eternal family. I realize that in today's world the word "family" does not always bring to mind the warm, nurturing and supportive feelings that it should. Yet, God really wants to have us as His true children! He wants to adopt us as His sons and daughters with full rights and privileges, and even an inheritance! Nothing makes me feel more special than this. Hebrews 2:10–13 says that Jesus is not ashamed to call the sons "brothers" because they are of the same family and father. I cannot think of anything that demonstrates the love of God more than Him wanting us to be together with Him forever.Of all the names or titles a person could wear, the noblest is "child of God." To think that before the foundation of the world, God chose to make an opportunity for us to become a part of His eternal family is almost too wonderful for me to grasp.

Ultimately, we determine something's value by what someone is willing to pay for it. If that be true, then redemption loses no value here! In fact, it becomes even more valuable when we appreciate the high price that was paid to redeem us. Occasionally we will read in a paper or see on the news that something was purchased at an auction and the price that was paid was the highest ever paid for this particular kind of thing, whether it be a painting, or a coin or stamp. What a difference it makes when we realize that the price paid to redeem us was, is and always will be the highest price ever paid for anything. Paul tells us that our redemption is through the blood of Jesus Christ and is in accordance with the riches of God's grace. Peter tells us that "it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that we were redeemed..., but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Pet. 1:18–19). The most precious thing in our body is our blood, for in it is life. The most precious blood of all is the blood of Jesus the Christ, for in it is eternal life.

God sought to redeem us with the high price of the life of His Son, and He did so graciously as a gift. However, you must receive this gift according to the will of God. Just like the coupons earlier, redemption must be in accordance with the terms of the offer. Christ died to redeem all people, but the ones who will be redeemed are the ones who receive it properly. Then, when we have received that redemption we can be "filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy" (1 Pet. 1:8) because of what we have been redeemed from, what we have been redeemed for, and the high price that was paid to redeem us. Thus, I am valuable to God. That truth alone adds more to my self–esteem than I will ever need!■

Carl Etchison is the pulpit minister for the church in Greenville, NC. Contact him at 1706 SE Greenville Blvd., Greenville, NC 27858.

In Christ

Forgiven In Christ

By Paul Jarrett

"IN HIM WE HAVE REDEMPTION through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He has lavished upon us" (Eph. 1:7–8a).

Have you ever encountered something you felt was too good to be true? What your eyes were seeing and your ears were hearing just could not be real. Perhaps it was a commercial, or an ad in a newspaper or magazine. Being the cynics that so many "too good to be true" offers have made of us, we have probably doubted what we were seeing and hearing. We have learned (sometimes through costly experience) that in the advertising world a good rule of thumb is "if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is."

Many of us have carried this same cynicism into our dealings with others. We have been conditioned to be suspicious of those perfect job descriptions. We have learned to keep our defenses in place in our personal relationships so as to not be hurt when friends, spouses, and parents betray us. This same cynicism carries over into our dealings with our fellow Christians. Worse than that, it even impacts our ability to accept God's favor. When God tells us in His word that we are saved by grace we are suspicious and nervous, rather than comforted and secure.

The apostle Paul had a difficult time accepting the salvation that comes by grace through faith. As Saul the persecutor, before coming to accept the salvation that is a gift of God, he was driven by the need to prove his zeal for God. Saul had to show his own righteousness in order to prove he was worthy of God's acceptance. However, as he finally came to realize, he was never able to be righteous enough to deserve God's salvation.

Paul finally found comfort and security when he was able to accept the reality of forgiveness in Christ. That which seemed too good to be true proved to be real. This realization led Paul to praise God for His indescribable gift in Christ (2 Cor. 9:15). It led him to pray that all of his brethren after the flesh would come to realize that all their zeal that was being spent to establish their own righteousness would never achieve the true righteousness that comes by faith (Rom. 10:1–4).

The acceptance of God's kindness made possible by the blood of Christ changed Paul in ways that could never be accomplished by means of religious zeal. The kindness of God gave Paul the personal assurance he craved as he committed his life to the one in whom he had come to believe (2 Tim. 1:8–12). The kindness of God changed Paul's treatment of others as he went from a persecutor to an encourager (1 Tim. 1:12–17).

Acceptance of God's grace did not make Paul any less diligent in his efforts to serve God. However, his service was no longer motivated by a desire to prove his own righteousness. Rather, his service was motivated by a loving response to the righteousness which had been bestowed on him in Christ (Phil. 3:1–14).

The reality which Paul experienced when he finally accepted as true that which sounds too good to be true is a reality we would all do well to appreciate. It was Paul's prayer that the Ephesians to whom our text was first addressed would have their eyes opened to the "surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Eph. 1:19). This yet remains an appropriate prayer for God's people today.

With this blessing of forgiveness in mind, we must be careful to maintain a biblical balance between man's responsibility to respond to God's gift and God's gracious provision of the gift. Our text makes it clear that forgiveness in Christ was an initiative taken by God. Thus, we must first emphasize what God has done in Christ as the real power to save and transform sinners. Only when we have first placed the focus on the blessing that is to be found *in Christ* is it then appropriate to speak of what one must do to get *into Christ.* First, God's gracious provision of forgiveness in Christ. Then, man's response of faith. If we do otherwise we distort the message of the gospel.

When we come to appreciate the reality of forgiveness of sins to be found in Christ we will be impacted in the manner described in Titus 1:1–7. In this text Paul tells Titus, "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Are you living your life in the reality of forgiveness of sins to be found in Christ?■

Paul Jarrett preaches for the Archdale church in Charlotte. Contact him at PO Box 241002, Charlotte, NC 28224.

Accepted in Christ, *continued from page 5. . .*

congregation's of God's people. Submission to the laws and commands revealed in Scripture is not an optional matter (Matt. 7:21–23), and neither is conformity to the patterns and traditions enjoined by the Lord upon His accepted children (2 Thess. 3:6–15). Such obedience and compliance is not only required but also serves as our safeguard against being led astray by any that would deceive us (2 Thess. 2:15).

Those, then, who receive God's grace and become acceptable to Him become part of the church of Christ as described in the pages of the New Testament. When one is a member of this church, his assurance of acceptability is grounded in the word of God. He has assurance that by God's grace on the basis of Jesus Christ he is acceptable to God and has been made a member of His family.■

Craig Hinrichs preaches for the church in Winnsboro, SC. Contact him at PO Box 97, Winnsboro, SC 29180.

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Sealed With the Spirit in Christ

By Terry Graves

PAUL WROTE TO THE EPHESIANS, "Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession–to the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:13b–14). Dale Moody has observed that "Blessing God is a sacred bridge between the worship of the synagogue and the worship of the church, and the former no doubt influenced the latter. The great difference is that Christians, who believe that Jesus is the Messiah, bless God through Christ in the Spirit, but the Hallelujah note is the very heart of all Biblical worship and of all worship based on the Bible." God is God, deserving to be praised and honored. One purpose of Ephesians 1 is to point us to God as a Being worthy of worship and to His church as a body to which it is worth belonging.

The apostle encourages us to praise, bless and speak well of God. God the Father is honored (1:3–6). Christ the Son is honored (1:7–12). And the Holy Spirit is recognized and honored (1:13–14). Moody also wrote, "It is impossible to worship the living God of the New Testament in deep experience and with true understanding when the Holy Spirit is neglected. Indeed, it is impossible even to know him in the fullness of his revelation and in the benefits of his redemption if men 'have never heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' This is the plight of all too many today."

The Holy Spirit is God. He is the invisible presence and power of God. He is the wind and breath of God. For the Christian, the Spirit is the indwelling presence and power of the risen, living Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:9–11; 2 Cor. 3:17–18). He is God's gift to every baptized believer (Acts 2:38). The Spirit is the other comforter, or helper, who is like Jesus and who represents Jesus to His disciples in His indwelling, empowering ministry on their behalf (John 14:16–18).

The Holy Spirit is a deposit, a good faith pledge, of blessings yet to come.

Paul says that we have been sealed with the Spirit. After we heard the word of truth and we trusted Jesus Christ, we were "marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit." Being sealed with the Spirit is the sign that God has accepted the believer. It is the guarantee that all God's promises will be fulfilled in the believer. We may know that someone belongs to God because of the evidence that the Spirit is at work within that person's life. We should look for the fruit of the Spirit-love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23).

A seal had two purposes on a document in the world of Paul's day. First, it was a sign of ownership. By placing my seal on a document, I am acknowledging my ownership of it. In addition, the seal served to protect documents from tampering. When God gave us His Holy Spirit in baptism, He placed His mark of ownership upon us. He has clearly identified us as His own—His prized possession. We belong to

Him. The seal of the Spirit is God's way of saying, "This man, this woman, belongs to me." Further, the seal of the Spirit is also a sign of God's protection. Like protecting a document from those who would tamper with it, the Holy Spirit becomes a protective seal to keep the believer safe within God's care.

Paul further teaches that the Holy Spirit, with whom we are sealed in Christ, is "a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance" until we experience full and final redemption. That is, the Spirit is like a down payment. As we live now in the power of the Spirit, we experience a mere taste of what eternal life will be like in the age to come. The Holy Spirit is a deposit, a good faith pledge, of blessings yet to come. We have not yet been totally redeemed. We have been redeemed spiritually, but we await the glory of immortality (the redemption of our bodies, Rom. 8:23).We have not yet received our full inheritance because we are not in heaven. Yet, we know it will happen because we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. God has given us the promised Spirit as a down payment so that we can know He will not renege on the rest of His promises.

The sealing with the Holy Spirit represents God's commitment to us and His investment in us. He gave Himself for us in the person of Christ, and He gives Himself to us in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit continually reminds us that we are children of God and will one day see the fulfillment of God's promises. Let us give thanks to God for the gift of His Spirit, His work within us, and our inheritance which He guarantees. May every aspect of our lives be for the praise of His glory.■

Terry Graves preaches for the church in Shelby. Contact him at PO Box 414, Shelby, NC 28151-0414.

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Our Inheritance In Christ

By Kirk Sams

STANDING NEXT TO ED MCMAHON on national television, he hands you a check for 10 million dollars and as you receive it your mind wanders. This is unbelievable! Oh, you knew it was possible, but who could imagine. All of those forms and stickers making sure that each one had been applied in the correct manner and order. The anxious waiting and the one in a million hope that the right envelope would arrive in the mail. You followed each instruction to the letter, making sure that every detail was completed to the best of your ability. Yet, now as you stand there the dream becomes a reality. You have won.

Your phone rings and your late Uncle Bill's attorney informs you that you have been named in his will. Your loved him very dearly but never expected this! The attorney further informs you of the procedure that must be followed for you to inherit the promised treasure.

Neither of these supposed scenarios are adequate to describe the incredible promise found within the pages of the New Testament. As Paul lists the **spiritual** blessings in Christ, he includes a very intriguing promise, "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:11,12). In another letter, Paul gives the reason for our being a part of the family of God, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children then heirs—joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified togetheror a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives" (Heb. 9:16,17).

It is God's will that we receive a portion of the promised riches which heaven has to offer. Sometimes we go to extremes to minimize the nature of the lavish promises of God. Maybe because we feel guilty when we start thinking of his promises in terms of financial success. The Creator of this universe describes the New Heaven with the imagery of streets of gold, walls of precious jewels and gates of pearl. The form and substance of these promises is real! He wants us to have His best. As He counseled the lukewarm church at Laodicea, "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint you eyes with eye salve, that you may see" (Rev. 3:18).

It is God's ability that is overwhelming. From our lips comes the song "This Is My Father's World," but do we really comprehend the majesty of his possessions. John's initial observation of Jesus places this in perspective, "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3). We have obtained an inheritance through Him because the Spirit "is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:14). The source of existence wants to share and from that wealth we are blessed.

It is God's relationship with us that is undeserved. Notice that it is God's relationship with us and not our relationship with him. We, in the words of the son in the parable of old, are no longer worthy to called His son. Yet He has chosen us to make us a part of the family of God. Similar to the two examples shared at the beginning, our inheritance should be astonishing. We do not deserve this lavish treatment. Neither are we lucky enough to be picked with the winning number. God has decided to give us an opportunity to reestablish a relationship that was lost when sin separated us from God. John states it this way, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God! Therefore the world does not know us; because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when His is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:1,2).

Because we have been born into the family of God through baptism, we are now members of a very wealthy family with all the rights and privileges that provides.

It is because of God's great love for us that we can be one of His heirs. What a privilege! Let us join with David as he responds to God in adoration: "Deliver my life . . . from men of this world who have their portion in this life, and whose belly You fill with Your hidden treasure. They are satisfied with children, and leave the rest of their possession for their babies. As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness" (Ps. 17:13-15).■

Kirk Sams preaches for the church in Kannapolis. Contact him at 2315 Concord Lake Rd., Kannapolis, NC 28083.

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Editor's Note: The following is the text of a presentation made on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Cole Mill Road Church of Christ in Durham, NC in July 1994.

A Renaissance for Restoration

By Mark A. Matson

THERE ARE APPROPRIATE TIMES IN the lives of individuals and of organizations to take stock, to reexamine priorities and to recalibrate the compass that guides our lives. Anniversaries are a traditional time of taking stock, and it is with love and appreciation, not only for the Christ's church, but for this local manifestation of it that I offer the following thoughts.

The past few months here at Cole Mill have caused me to ponder the nature of the church, and particularly the local church. I have seen people come and people go over the past five years here at Cole Mill . This movement of people has been significant both for the calibre of people that have taken their place here in these pews as well as for the sheer numbers of people that have passed in and out of the life of this church during that time. This movement of people resembles nothing so much as a stream, a stream of people coming from various backgrounds and locales, and proceeding on to new places and new vocations. And for a time that stream of people has passed by the banks of this locale, Cole Mill Road Church of Christ.

From many churches, and, indeed, from no churches at all, they come to join the stream. And as the movement of people in and out of this congregation attests, this is a fast moving stream. But here at the corner of Berini and Cole Mill Road, for a moment, the stream tarries for a while, enjoying the shade, only to find the current still has its will to work. And so, after being shaped and guided by the contours of the bank, and after having also left its impress upon us—much as a mountain stream gradually wears down the banks that surround it—the water moves on and new water moves in to replace it.

But aside from a place along the way, a shady glen between rapids, what do we—and what should we—offer here at Cole Mill to these rushing waters that pass between our banks? One could, of course, mention the love and care that many of us have found here; love that has often come at precisely that point in our lives when we could not do without it. Love that accepts pain and suffering, as well as joy and celebration. One could mention the fellowship of friends and friends to be. And one could comment on the sense of peace and unity that shelters those who tarry here. But I wish, rather, to focus on the vital function that biblical study plays in the life of our congregation; indeed, the function it must play in the life of the church. And further, I wish to examine how what we are attempting here in our approach to Scripture might have an effect in the broader river of Christianity.

The Role of Scripture Study in the Church.

It strikes me that my metaphor of the church as a stream comprised of many individuals can be helpful in describing the role which Scripture plays within the church. The character of a stream is determined by the integrity of its banks. Where the banks are strong, as in a mountain stream finding its way through fissures of granite, then the stream is sharply defined, and it remains that way over time. On the other hand, when the banks are soft and malleable, then the stream from time to time spills outside its banks, and over time the stream meanders from place to place.

And so it is in the church where the Scriptures define both the nature of the local church and also guide the stream of individuals in their behavior so that the direction of their future movement is appropriate and effective. In a word, the role of Scripture is as an *authority*, standing over the church and the individual as God's word for our individual lives as well as for our corporate life together.

Scripture functioned this way in the early church. The process of gathering together the Scriptures is known as canonization. It is perhaps more instructive to say that this collection became known as the *canon*, or the measuring rod, against which the church's teachings and individual activity were to be measured. This idea that Scripture's primary function is as authority is seen in a passage we all know very well, 2 Timothy 3:14-17:

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believe, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work."

Now this passage is used as support for all kinds of views toward Scripture, many of which are no more than inferences or assumptions. But what it does say, clearly, is that Scripture functioned for the author as a guide for individuals to know how to order their lives so that it is pleasing to God. Scripture does not answer all the questions, nor is it a multi-purpose encyclopedia of ancient history. It's purpose is to provide direction and encouragement, to provide a fixed point which guides Christians in a world which constantly changes.

But having said that, how exactly is one to actually go about using the Scriptures? Who is responsible for interpreting the Scriptures and what methodology should be employed? Are we really willing to take the Bible seriously as an authority over us?

Dangers in Interpretation and Use of the Bible

There are, I think, real dangers and difficulties with the way churches today approach the Scriptures. I would like to detail here three such difficulties, and then offer a proposal for how Scripture interpretation should take place in the church.

1. In the first place, Scripture interpretation too often is restricted by church tradition. When churches rely uncritically on tradition instead of honest and piercing confrontation with the living Scriptures, the church suffers. It was, of course, in opposition to the church's tradition of selling indulgences that Martin Luther raised the banner of *sola scriptura*, or Scripture (Bible) only. In the early nineteenth century, churches were squaring off against one another on the basis of creeds and confessions, i.e., traditions *derived* from Scripture, but not *directly* stated in Scripture. Indeed, Thomas Campbell found himself in this type of situation in rural Pennsylvania when he chose to administer communion to other Presbyterians outside his local group, defying his church's tradition, but upholding Scripture's teaching about unity (Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement* [Joplin, MO: College Press, 1981], 138). When traditions displace Scripture and openness to the Scriptures, then we can no longer be said to be a biblical people. But having raised that concern, and it is a serious concern in the churches of Christ, one must also note that tradition is a valid factor in the *interpretation* of the Scriptures. We, who live and worship today, are not the only Christians in the history of the world; we live constantly with the cloud of witness of those who have gone on before. In effect, we stand on their shoulders, and should endeavor to listen to their voices. But I am not just talking about voices from the American Restoration Movement, but all of christendom. How the church in its entire history has interpreted Scripture is important to our current understanding. We must listen to the voices of those first four centuries of church fathers who carefully selected the books that make up our canon. Should we accept the fruits of their selection, and turn our back on their understanding of those same books? We should be listening to the voices of Luther and Calvin, who at great pain redirected the church to the study of Scripture. And we should be listening to our own Restoration Movement leaders who forged important paths in their understanding of the Bible.

2. Secondly, there is the real danger of interpretations reached by individuals which are dangerous or simply wrong. Stanley Hauerwas, professor of Theology at Duke University, has recently raised some serious concerns about how the Scriptures are used in American Chris-

tianity. In *Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America,* Hauerwas argues that the church is currently pressed in two directions, both of which stem from our tendency toward "rugged individualism." In the first instance, the individual Christian approaches the Scriptures as an inherently competent reader and interpreter, often using simple—indeed, simplistic—approaches that often do violence to the text. Hauerwas, ever the provocative critic, argues: "No task is more important than for the Church to take the Bible out of the hands of individual Christians in North America.... North American Christians are trained to believe that they are capable of reading the Bible without spiritual and moral transformation" (p. 15).

In Hauerwas's view, a great danger lies precisely in the average American's reading and interpreting the Bible. Instead of reading it within the context of the church's teaching, and under her constraint, the average Christian reads in his or her own secular, modern meaning, or else a narrow and simplistic approach. To the extent that Scripture interpretation is separated from the living work of the church, it is indeed sterile, untested, and perhaps erroneous.

But it would appear that Hauerwas's criticism has created a straw man. Is the danger really the individual Christian interpreting the Bible to suit his or her personal prerogatives, outside of the church's transformational power? Or, is the greater danger restricting the Bible to those who will interpret it "correctly?" (whatever the politics of correctness in vogue). More importantly, this straw man sets up a false dichotomy. The choice ought not to be between an individual's interpretation and the church's interpretation, but the choice should be made for one to strengthen and support (or, to correct) the other.

3. Finally, Hauerwas is equally critical of turning over the task of interpreting the Bible to biblical scholars. Some of these biblical scholars, he notes, often approach the study of the Scriptures from an anti-faith or, more usually, faith-neutral perspective. Such a posture of study can never appreciate what Scripture's true meaning is, as indeed Alexander Campbell noted: "Now we may with propriety say, that as it respects God, there is an understanding distance. All beyond that distance can not understand God; all within it can easily understand him in all matters of piety and morality. God himself is the center of that circle, and humility is the circumference"(Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System*, p. 6).

But more importantly to his argument, Hauerwas objects to the biblical critics because of their emphasis on what the biblical texts meant in their original context. This objection stems from the post-modernist conception that texts do not have "a meaning" which is privileged above others. Hauerwas puts the objection this way: "Fundamentalists and biblical critics alike argue that their project is to get to the text's 'real meaning.' But of course the text has no 'real meaning'; rather the Scriptures are maintained by the Church as having particular prominence because Christians have learned that the Scriptures exist to further the practices of witness and conversion. ...

"Of course the Church creates the meaning of Scripture, but that does not invite an orgy of subjectivistic arbitrariness" (Hauerwas, p. 36).

It is important to note that Hauerwas's rejection of the idea that a text, any text, has a particular meaning, is certainly shared by a growing number of individuals. **But having cut the connection between a text and its original historical context, one indeed is free to "re-write" a text with amazing freedom.** If we are no longer concerned with the Bible's original meaning, then we no longer take seriously the historical particularity of revelation. We can, for instance, forget about the fact that the gospels were written against a cultural backdrop quite different than ours, and that letters of Paul were addressed to specific situations that may not be completely applicable now. A few examples of the gap which creates difficulty in understanding the New Testament might be illustrative: (1) it is tempting to interpret the "wise" in 1 Corinthians as a general comment on wisdom in general, whereas it probably reflects a controversy over the relative role that Greco-Roman sophistry (i.e. rhetorical power) would play in the church; (2) the admonition for women's

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silence in 1 Timothy must certainly grapple with the nature of the heresy which is being combatted here, and the way it is intertwined with some women's roles; and (3) any reading of the Revelation must grapple with the nature of apocalyptic literature of the time. One might generally heed the warning of my friend Scott Bartchy who once noted that we are reading the family mail, not mail addressed directly to us. But more importantly, if we remove the external standard of the original meaning from its privileged place in our reading and interpretation of Scriptures, we are in effect free to re-write Scriptures according to our own desires. When this happens, then Scripture no longer serves as authority over the church, but rather becomes subservient to the church; the stream then chooses where the banks should be located, rather than the banks defining the stream's course. I would argue that precisely this approach is *always* open to the orgy of subjectivism that Hauerwas claims the church can avoid.

A Proposal for Use of the Bible

What, then, should be the church's approach to scriptural study and interpretation?

I would argue that for the church to really take Scripture seriously, the following elements should be an integral part of the church's life, for youth as well as adults.

1. In the first place, the study of the Bible should involve every individual. This is not the task of the preacher alone, but is the task of the church. There was a time when Churches of Christ and Christian Churches were known as the most biblically literate of all churches (Michael Weed, "The Church Today," *Leaven*, [Vol. II. No. 3, 1993]: 30). I am not sure that distinction holds true anymore.

At the very least, the lack of knowledge about the contents of the Bible or how to study the Bible robs individuals of the ability to truly read and appreciate the Bible. Contrary to Hauerwas's desire to remove the Bible from the individual Christian's hands, I think that individual devotional reading should be encouraged. But simply handing out Bibles, even if they are the NIV instead of King James, will not be sufficient to help people understand. We must equip them with regular Bible classes, and especially with classes that teach them *how* to study.

2. Secondly, the study of the Bible must be open to the most piercing of questions. We must be able to explain how James and Paul can function together in the same collection. We must honestly see and confront four different gospels. Only when Job's suffering challenges the promises that God answers prayer, and only when the statement "God is love" is considered in the context of Christ on the cross and Paul's repeated sufferings, can we begin to appreciate the richness of the Bible for our common and personal lives. In this context, the results of modern scholarship should find their way into our classes and thinking, not necessarily because scholars are right, but because they challenge us to think seriously about the Scriptures. We cannot hide behind the walls of the church and think in a sheltered way that is alien to our critical thinking in other matters, especially not if we claim that our Bible matters in the world. We cannot be effective in representing the gospel, to ourselves let alone to an increasingly critical and suspicious generation, if we have not been willing to do the hard work of critically confronting the text and our own pre- or misconceptions.

3. Most importantly, we must engage in this study of the Scriptures as the people of God, gathered as a community, committed to growing toward a common understanding of Scripture. There is simply no true reading of the Bible outside of the context of the church. In this aspect, Stanley Hauerwas's book, despite my misgivings in other matters, is completely correct. It is precisely when we are gathered together as churches, in classes large and small, adults and children, Sunday and weekdays, that real interpretation of the Bible takes place. We each bring our own interpretations, our own readings, our own concerns, and we mix these together and forge anew a meaning (or, application) for today.

This process is not easy, it is real work. And it is not always agreeable. When individuals come together from various points of view, there will be insights, there will be struggles, and, yes, there will be differences of opinion. But it is precisely this struggle which must be valued. The common study of the Bible can be likened to a crucible in which different ores are mixed under high heat to produce a new, stronger and more durable metal. In the struggle for meaning which takes place in Bible classes that *search* for meaning, the outcome is stronger than steel and more precious then gold.

For such a process to work, however, the acceptance of differences of opinion must be maintained. Without this, a false uniformity is enforced which only weakens the church. We should remember ideas put forth by Thomas Campbell at the very genesis of the Restoration Movement, ideas which helped it to become the fastest growing movement in America for a time: "Although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connexion (*sic*), and evidently see that they are so .... Therefore no such deduction can be made terms of communion, but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the church" (Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address*. Proposition 6).

It was precisely this willingness to struggle for understanding and unity through searching study of the Bible that was the hallmark of the earliest restoration movement. It remains a valid approach today.

Cole Mill as a Focal Point for a Renaissance for Restoration

What I have proposed is not an unreachable idealistic plan. It is the way that we have approached the task of biblical interpretation here at Cole Mill Road Church of Christ. We don't do it perfectly, but the approach is that described above. It is clear that Bible study remains a crucial part of our Sunday meeting together. The regular Sunday School is consistently well attended, as are the Sunday evening classes. But opportunity and attendance do not define a classroom curriculum. Instead, it is what takes place inside the classes that counts. Although there is a continual variety of subjects and teachers, it is fair to say that at Cole Mill, we do take the Bible seriously.

But having said all this about how to study the Bible, we might ask, "so what?" What benefits accrue from such an approach? In closing, let me suggest the following benefits which derive from serious, critical, open-minded congregational Bible study:

1. A clear benefit of such an approach to Bible study is the strength it gives the church as

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a body. Present and past members alike would likely attest to the strength of purpose and unity that exists here at Cole Mill. Despite significant differences in temperament and philosophy among members, the constantly open focus on the biblical study here serves to bind us together in a common purpose.

2. A second benefit comes in the growth in leadership and ministry that derives from a real centering on scripture study. Our efforts at Butner, at UNC and Duke, ministry to special needs families, our role with the area congregations of the churches of Christ all come as a derived benefit from our understanding of mission and ministry which results from Bible study.

3. For many people, the most important benefit comes from the strength to face life in more creative and faithful ways. This last year we lost our lovely seventeen-year-old daughter in a car accident. Nothing can prepare a parent for that. But with the strength which comes from knowing where to turn for questions, if not always answers, we struggle on. And so it is with countless individuals—those depressed, without work, with relationships ending, or battles continuing with weaknesses and sin—for these individuals, only real knowledge of all of God's working with humanity can help. A deficient or tradition-bound faith is simply incapable of providing the strength to live life courageously and faithfully.

The original restoration fathers, Alexander and Thomas Campbell, Barton Stone, Walter Scott and others believed that a church whose faith was anchored in the Bible was a church which would lead and invigorate Christianity as none other could. I still believe that. Here at Cole Mill, we are trying to live out the restoration ideals with fresh vigor, and fresh vision. This renaissance of restoration, we hope, will keep this section of the stream of Christianity a pleasant, refreshing, and healthy place for God's people.■

Contact Mrk A. Matson at Cole Mill Rd. Church of Christ, 1617 Cole Mill Rd., Durham, NC 27705.

Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

MOCKSVILLE...Carolina Bible Camp announces that November 13–15 have been set aside for shopping at Food Lion. The camp will receive a donation from Food Lion equal to 5% of the total purchases made by qualified shoppers during those three days. For more information, contact Judy or Elizabeth Swicegood, 1662 Jericho Church Road, Mocksville, NC 27028. The CBC Fun Fair is scheduled for September 23, 1995. Not only will there be food and games, but also there will be crafts for sale and an auction. All proceeds will go to Carolina Bible Camp & Retreat Center, Inc. For more information concerning the Fun Fair, contact Randall Burton, RR 2 Box 5158, Mt. Gilead, NC (901) 439-5353. The Third Annual Church Leadership Seminar will be held October 27–28 at CBC & Retreat Center. Randy Harris from Nashville, TN will be the featured resource person. The theme will be "Spiritual Disciplines for Church Leadership." Contact Phil Knizer at (704) 364-0748 for more details.

Send News to Michael R. Mobley, 301 Reed Creek Rd., Mooresville, NC 28115.

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL. 37, NO. 9 SEPTEMBER 1995

May God himself,
the God of peace,
sanctify you
through and through.
May your whole
spirit, soul, and body
be kept blameless
at the coming of our
Lord Jesus Christ.
The one who calls you
is faithful and he will do it.
—1 Thessalonians 5:22–24

Carolina Christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)

EDITORIAL & PUBLICATION STAFF
Dennis Conner, Interim Editor
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
Jim Mullican, Associate Editor
Michael Mobley, News Editor
Tim Sensing, Book Review Editor

CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Road, Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: individual—$8/year ($15/2 years and $22/3 years); club of five or more—$7.50 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles—50¢/copy/month, or church mailing list (minimum 15) 60¢/copy/month.

Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes with Form 3579 to:
Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Address editorial matter to:
Dennis Conner
PO Box 1369
Yadkinville, NC 27055-1369

Address news items to:
Michael Mobley
301 Reed Creek Road
Mooresville, NC 28115

Address commercial advertising inquiries to:
Jacobs List, Inc.
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All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 10.

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

THE BIBLE IS ALWAYS RELEVANT. I recently came across the following list of "Top Ten Proverbs for People in the News." Even though slightly dated—the list was prepared last spring—these Proverbs should be kept in mind whether or not we enjoy sports, politics, or find ourselves in the News.

For UCLA Basketball Fans: "Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice"(Proverbs 24:17).

For Kato Kaelin: "A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray" (Proverbs 12:26).

F*or all Talk Radio Hosts, Preachers, and Politicians*: "When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise" (Proverbs 10:19).

For Freedomfest Attendees (Formerly known as Freaknikers): "Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper. Your eyes will see strange sights and your mind imagine confusing things" (Proverbs 23:31–33).

For the Baseball Players' Union: "All hard work brings a profit but mere talk leads only to poverty" (Proverbs 14:23).

For the Baseball Owners: "Where there are no oxen, the manger is empty, but from the strength of an ox comes an abundant harvest" (Proverbs 14:4).

For Judge Ito: "When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers" (Proverbs 21:15).

For Everyone Involved in the O.J. Trial: "The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him" (Proverbs 18:17).

For Both Houses of Congress: "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed" (Proverbs 16:3).

For Newt Gingrich: "He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin" (Proverbs 13:3).

Staff Changes

With the issue of *Carolina Christian* I will conclude my work as editor. I am grateful for the opportunities for service in the Kingdom that have come my way during the past twenty-two years. My work with *Carolina Christian* has been both challenging and rewarding. My prayer is that God will continue to bless the seed that has been sown and that fruit will yet be borne to His name's honor and glory.

Dennis Conner has been recommended to the Board of Directors as the next editor. Dennis is no stranger to the readers of *Carolina Christian.* He is a native Carolinian and all of his fulltime ministerial work has been done in North Carolina. He is well known and well respected for his work with young people in Youth Rallies and especially with Carolina Bible Camp.

I will work with Dennis to ensure a smooth transition of the editorial responsibilities. During this time we prayerfully request the patience and goodwill of our readers. We will do our best to make sure that *Carolina Christian* remains a positive voice promoting the Lord's work among the churches of Christ in the Carolinas.

Beginning immediately, all correspondence with *Carolina Christian* should be addressed to Dennis Conner at PO Box 1369, Yadkinville, NC 27055-1369.❐

Change

By Tim Sensing

THE TEACHER GROANED, "They asked if I would teach them how to do square roots. I went home to learn how. I thought to myself, 'This stuff is too hard to learn.' I told the kids to buy a calculator."

As I listened to this exchange between colleagues, I thought back to the days my High School teacher taught me how to use a slide rule. I wondered then, when will I ever need to use a slide rule? You see, I already had a calculator that would do more than I could understand. However, the teacher wanted to hold on to a method that had lost its value. The purist will remark, "Today's generation will lose more than just a method, they will lose understanding!" But the generation that did square roots long-hand criticized the generation which introduced the new-fangled slide rule. And my generation will criticize the next. Maybe we should bring back the abacus?

The farmer no longer uses a mule. The teacher no longer uses a mimeograph machine. Tomorrow's computer is obsolete. And the church makes needed adjustments in methods and styles.

Times are changing. In a 1990 book, *Educational and Psychological Measurement and Evaluation*, the editors noted, "You probably once learned, and then mercifully forgot, the barbarous, tedious procedure for calculating the square root of a number. The computations are so time-consuming that in our opinion it is an unwarranted expenditure of time to relearn the computational mechanics. In 1965, a calculator with the square root feature cost $1400. Today, hand calculators that give square roots silently and more quickly are available for under $10! Stop squandering your riches on things of lesser value and get yourself one."

The farmer no longer uses a mule. The teacher no longer uses a mimeograph machine. Tomorrow's computer is obsolete. And the church makes needed adjustments in methods and styles. What is lost? What is gained? Technology is escalating. Knowledge is exploding. Leaders with vision press forward while naysayers of doom pull back. **Where can I take my stand?** Let all "generations" read Psalm 22 which concludes:

But you, O Lord, sit enthroned forever; your renown endures through all generations. ... Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord. ... In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end. The children of your servants will live in your presence; their descendants will be established before you. ❑

Tim Sensing is the Pulpit Minister for the Mebane Street church in Burlington, NC. Contact him at PO Box 1081, Burlington, NC 27216-1861.

Abiding in God's Grace

By Paul E. Jarrett

MUCH OF THE DENOMINATIONAL world has been influenced doctrinally by the tenets of John Calvin. One of these tenets which has had a particularly strong influence may be described as "the impossibility of apostasy." Essentially, this doctrine states that once a person has been saved it is impossible for them to so sin as to be lost again.

In responding to this erroneous doctrine we have been guilty at times of leaving the impression (if not actually intending to imply) that a single sin might cause those once saved to lose the security that is ours in Christ. This false impression has led many Christians to live fretfully as they worry about whether they may ultimately fall short of God's saving grace in judgment.

The one who denies the possibility of apostasy and the one who worries about being found acceptable in judgment both need to learn the same lesson regarding God's grace.

The one who denies the possibility of apostasy and the one who worries about being found acceptable in judgment both need to learn the same lesson regarding God's grace. Both need to learn that grace is a state in which the saved reside.

The one who denies the possibility of apostasy needs to recognize that grace does not follow him around wherever he may choose to go. On the other hand, the one who frets over his standing in God's sight in judgment needs to realize that grace is not something God doles out like bread to a beggar: only on request.

That God's grace is a state in which one abides is borne out in such texts as John 15:9,10; Romans 8:35–39; 1 John 1:5–7 and numerous references to salvation being *in Christ.* This state of grace is beautifully illustrated in the parable of the prodigal son in which the Father's house represents the state of God's grace.

Those who deny the possibility of apostasy need to recognize how they chose to enter the state of God's grace. In a similar manner they retain the right to choose to leave the state of God's grace. That they can do so is seen in the fact that a whole book of the New Testament—Hebrews—was written to exhort Christians to not abandon their faith.

Passages such as Hebrews 3:12–14; 6:4–6; 10:23–29, 35–39; and 12:12–17 contain pointed exhortations to Christians to abide in the state of God's grace and not to depart. Not only do these texts indicate the possibility of apostasy, they indicate that the only thing which is *impossible* is for anyone to be saved apart from abiding in God's grace. Those who become embittered towards God and/or willfully abuse His grace will find no place of repentance, for there is no salvation apart from abiding in God's grace.

Those who fret over their eternal destiny may find comfort in a proper handling of those texts which speak of the possibility of apostasy. They should note that their security is not threatened by a single sin, or even a multiplicity of sins. God knows we are weak and that we sin daily. Rather than becoming doubtful of our salvation when we are weak, we should be caused to rejoice all the more in His grace in which we are privileged to abide.

It was the acknowledgement of our inability to save ourselves which led us to seek refuge in God's grace. That being the case why should we be fearful that the Father who received us back as sons will choose to throw us out as worthless slaves when we fail to do what we acknowledged we could not do in coming to Him (i.e., keep His will perfectly).

Rather than doubting God's grace we need to rejoice in it. We need to rely on His grace to enable us to do what we could never do by our own power. When faced with doubts and trials let us heed the exhortation which reads: "Therefore strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed" (Heb. 12:12,13).❐

Paul is the Pulpit Minister for the Archdale church in Charlotte. Contact him at 1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210.

Preparing for the Future

By Paul Jackson

CARL GEORGE, IN HIS BOOK, *Prepare Your Church for the Future*, suggests some needs that the church of the 1990s must address in order to grow and to minister effectively to people. Consider four needs George identifies:

1. *The need for a personal touch.* Our technologically advanced society calls for a "high touch" experience. Interpersonal exchange. A place of caring relationships, a place where no one is overlooked—especially newcomers—is needed more than ever. Small groups can meet a real need here.

2. *The need for many options.* Men, women, teens, and children expect multiple-option choices in every area of their lives. Just think about Cable TV with its hundreds of stations. Churches can no longer be designed with a one-program option. Multiple classes. Worship services. Different needs met. Different ways in.

3. *The need to learn to cope with change.* The rate of change in our society has become more intense than in any previous generation. We must address the needs of a changing society and world. We must show the relevance of Jesus and the Gospel to people's lives. We must always seek to be *relevant* and *biblical*.

4. *The need to effectively use one's strengths.* Thriving churches discover creative ways to address a multiplicity of human interests, capitalizing on the motivations of their members. In other words, everyone utilizing his gifts and abilities for service is critical to the growing church of today—and tomorrow. Many members. Many gifts. Many ministries. One body.

Let's Recap:

—A caring place. Personal. Relational in nature.

—Multiple options. Programs, assemblies, classes and ministries. Something for everyone.

—Relevant. Up-to-date. On the cutting edge. Yet biblical.

—A place for involvement. Giving. Serving. A place to give back.

I have discovered that God is always eager to work through His people. He will, if we allow Him to do so. I have also discovered that God is an up-to-date 1995 God. He isn't stuck in a time-warp of the 1940s or '50s. His redemptive plan is continuing to unfold. He is not slumbering. He actively works—even now—to fulfill His plans for this generation. How exciting to see time, one's life, and the church from such a perspective.

The questions to ask are: What is God up to today? What does He want accomplished in this generation? What part do we, as part of His body, play in His overall redemptive plan for our communities?

Questions such as these will invariably lead down some exciting paths. They probably will lead down some new paths. And whenever that occurs, anxiety and some level of frustration are sure to result. Change always tends to make us uncomfortable. Anything new is suspect, often because it threatens the protective assumptions that we have built around us with the justification we need to support the inertia of the status quo.

As you contemplate the future of your particular congregation, meditate on the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Six times in this section of Scripture He says, "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ... but I say to you...." What did Jesus mean? Frankly, I believe He was saying that we are not bound to past voices, other authorities, or old models—"What ... was said to the men of old." He is saying that it is OK to let go of old ways to which we have become habituated, rather than to hold on to them as though they perpetuated our security.

Am I advocating change for the sake of change? No! Did Jesus? No! The problem in Jesus' day was that the familiar had lulled the religious leaders to sleep. Their self-imposed arbitrary limits were failing them. Consequently, they were failing God. Isn't this a constant threat for us as well?

My brothers and sisters, we must not fail God. We dare not fail Him!

We must not *sit still.*

We cannot *go backward.*

We must *move forward* with courage and conviction.

To that end, may God help us.❐

Paul is the Pulpit Minister for the Helen Street church in Fayetteville. Contact him at 500 Helen Street, Fayetteville, NC 28303.

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The Hands of Christ

By Phil Kinzer

DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR, a church building in Strasburg was destroyed. After the bombing, the members surveyed the area to see what damage was done. They were pleased that a statue of Christ with outstretched hands was still standing. It had been sculpted centuries earlier by a great artist.

When someone asks you to serve in a work in the church, that is likely the voice of God calling.

Taking a closer look, the people discovered both hands of Christ had been sheared off by a falling beam. Later, a sculptor in the town offered to replace the broken hands as a gift to the church. The church officials met to consider the offer and decided not to accept it. They felt the statue without hands would be a great illustration that God's work is done through His people.

In the church, Jesus uses human hands. We are the body of Christ. The church is the "second incarnation" of Jesus Christ. Sometimes those hands appear too weak and unqualified to accomplish the work of God, but those are the hands He uses.

Paul said, "Now *you* are the body of Christ, and *each one of you* is a part of it" (1 Cor. 12:27, emphasis added). God said of Saul, the most unlikely candidate of all, "this man is my chosen instrument" (Acts 9:15). No matter who you are, you have a place in the body of Christ. You are the hands of Christ in some way.

God did not make any one of us a new creation in Jesus and then have no service for us to do. Every part of a body has a function. When individual body parts do not work, it slows the entire body. It puts undue stresses on the parts of the body that are functioning properly.

There are so many wonderful opportunities to be the hands of Christ in the world today. When someone asks you to serve in a work in the church, that is likely the voice of God calling. How else would He call you today? Teachers, teacher's helpers, people to fill roles in the public assemblies, people to help teach the gospel to those who do not know the Lord are always needed in the church.

Christians should say "Yes" when called to serve, and they should pray hard before saying "No." It could well be the voice of God, on the lips of a willing servant, asking one to be the hands of Christ to the world today. It is not an accident that Christians are called the body of Christ. ☐

Phil Kinzer serves as Pulpit Minister for the Providence Road church in Charlotte. Contact him at 4900 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28226.

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A Balanced Trinity

By Robert A. MacDonald

WE ARE REVERENT TO ONE GOD IN Three Persons, the Trinity. Sadly, our Trinity is unbalanced because our reverence is unbalanced. It may be that *fear* minimizes our reverence toward God's Holy Spirit.

It appears to this writer that a minimal amount of teaching and preaching is being done on the theme that God's Holy Spirit is in us. This is the case in spite of these clear messages from Paul and John:

1. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? (1 Cor. 6:19). There is no limitation, no qualification on this statement.

2. "And this is how we know that He (God) lives in us: we know it by the Spirit He gave us" (1 John 3:24b). This is limited in 3:24a to "those who obey his commands."

3. "God poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us" (Rom. 5:5b). This is limited in 5:1 to those who "have been justified by faith."

The message is clear. Yet, few elders and preachers stress with joy that God's Holy Spirit is in us.

Fear

It may very well be the case that fear motivates us to avoid speaking vigorously about God's Holy Spirit living in Christians. In our sinful weakness, we may fear being tarnished with the stigma of those erring ones who go beyond the Bible in claiming relationships with God's Holy Spirit which are not rooted in Scripture. Their error (of claiming more than the Bible supports) is their sin. Our sin is in failing to assert what the Bible truly says.

We err seriously by allowing their excessive claims to deny us the lesser (in comparison), but still glorious blessings which the Bible proclaims to be available through the Holy Spirit.

Non-Charismatic Blessings

We expound on the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22). But we rarely discuss the Holy Spirit's role in producing that fruit.

Some brave and caring elders and preachers should consider scriptural consistency and talk freely and joyously about seven non-charismatic blessings available to us from God's Holy Spirit, as follows:

I have discussed the first benign blessing which is limited to those who believe and obey: God's Holy Spirit is *in us*. Inspired Paul and John state it clearly as cited earlier. What comfort! What awe we should feel. He is *in* us. What care and discipline we should use! Yet, in this writer's experience this fact is not taught and stressed. As a result many congregations suffer from a lack of comfort and awe. Since God's Holy Spirit is in us, we are each *on stage*. Where are the elders and preachers who will warn us of this and encourage us to have more respect for God's Holy Spirit *in us*.

A second benign blessing is that God *strengthens us* through His Holy Spirit. This strengthening is *limited* very specifically. In Ephesians 3:16 Paul wrote, "For this reason I kneel to the Father. I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His

Holy Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." Where are those who teach us to pray that God will strengthen us through His Spirit in our inner being so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith?

Should your congregation grow faster? Could it do so with some strengthening for you in your efforts?

The third non-charismatic blessing is that God's Holy Spirit *intercedes* for us. Paul wrote, "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We know not what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans which cannot be expressed" (Rom. 8:26). What a blessing it is that God's Holy Spirit intercedes for us.

Next, God's Holy Spirit is in us as a deposit toward our inheritance. In Ephesians 1:13–14 Paul informed his readers, "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory." (See also 2 Cor. 1:22.) Let us hear, believe and remain as a possession of God!

Fifth, God's Holy *pours God's love into our hearts.* "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who he has given us" (Rom. 5:5b).

Blessing number six is found in Romans 8:16. "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

The final non-charismatic blessing is that God's Holy Spirit has brought His word to inspired men. (See 1 Cor. 2:12–13.)

It seems to this writer that this last blessing is the only one generally acknowledged among us. We seem to glory in joy only as we talk about this final blessing—that God's Holy Spirit brought us God's word. We are less (and often "non") communicative about His other six blessings identified above. We claim to believe in the Trinity; but apparently not a full Trinity.

There is nothing charismatic in the seven blessing set out. We try God's patience and weaken ourselves and Christ's church should we ignore inspired Scripture out of fear of being tainted as charismatic.

Each day in our private prayers we should thank God for sending Jesus to teach us and to offer us salvation; we should also thank Him for sending His Holy Spirit to help us. We should also ask for help from His Holy Spirit.

In addition, we should stop ignoring the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit in our pulpits and in our public prayers. Let us honor Him in our prayers as Paul did.

Conclusion

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Shall we confess our sin of practically ignoring God's Holy Spirit? Shall we glory in being aware of the full Trinity? Shall we personally grow spiritually? Shall Christ's church grow in spiritual strength and size, seeking God's help through His Holy Spirit?

"We know that we live in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit" (1 John 4:13).❐

Robert MacDonald worships with the church in Hendersonville, NC. He is not a trained theologian but he is a careful student and an thoughtful observer of the church. Contact him at 600 Carolina Village Road, Apt. #31, Hendersonville, NC 28792.

Crucifixion

By Charles R. Lambert

JESUS WAS FILLED WITH COMPASSION for all people, as can be seen throughout the Gospels. However, no single compassionate act ever performed by any person in time past, or in time to come, can compare with the crucifixion of Jesus.

Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a borrowed donkey on what has come to be called Palm Sunday. The crowd was huge. Many people laid their coats as well as palm leaves on the path (Matt. 21:7–9). Upon arriving in the city, Jesus entered the temple and cast out all who were buying and selling, and He overturned the money-changers' tables and the seats of those selling sacrifices (v.12).

Jesus healed many people, but the chief priest and the scribes questioned His authority. We call such situations today "power struggles." The plot to kill Jesus is recorded in Matthew 26:3–5, "Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtility, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people."

Jesus' disciples prepared the Passover meal in a borrowed, upper room. During the course of the meal, Jesus revealed that one of the disciples would betray Him that night. The Passover turned into a nightmare for the disciples: talk of betrayal, denial, crucifixion, and resurrection. Issues they would not fully understand until later.

Following the meal, Jesus took His disciples to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Once in the garden, Jesus separated Himself from even His "inner circle" of disciples by a short distance and fell to His face on the ground. He prayed that the cup might pass by Him. Jesus prayed hard to the Father that His life might be spared; all the while accepting His Father's will.

When it was time, Judas, leading a mob, approached Jesus and gave Him that fatal kiss. As Jesus was arrested, His disciples forsook Him and fled. Jesus was bound and led away to the high priest, where the elders and scribes were also assembled.

During the course of the mockery of a trial, Jesus' clothes were torn. His face was spat upon. He was accused of blasphemy. His face was slapped. He was beaten. He was condemned to death. And finally, He was delivered over to Pontius Pilate. Judas, in the meanwhile, realized the enormity of what he had done, and he went out and hanged himself (Matt. 27:5).

Before Pilate, Jesus was asked if He were the king of the Jews. He replied, "Thou sayest" (Matt. 27:11). Finding no

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fault in Jesus, Pilate was willing to release Jesus. He offered to release Barabbas, a thief who had preyed on them, or Jesus, a teacher who had healed them, thinking that there would be no chance that Jesus would not be chosen. However, the people cried out, “Let him be crucified” (v. 23), and “His blood be on us, and on our children” (v. 25). Attempting to wash away any responsibility for his actions, Pilate washed his hands, released Barabbas, had Jesus scourged, and delivered Him over to be crucified.

The soldiers stripped Jesus of His clothes, put a scarlet robe on Him, plaited a crown of thorns and put it on His head, put a reed as a scepter in His right hand, and then they bowed down and mocked Him saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” Then they crucified Him nailing Him to a cross. His side was pierced by a Roman spear while over His head a sign declared in Latin, Hebrew, and Greek: “This is the King of the Jews.” From Noon until 3 O’Clock there was darkness over the land while Jesus suffered on the cross. At the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.) Jesus cried out with a loud voice and died (Matt. 27:46–50).

Telling the story of the cross still requires that “repentance and remission of sins” be preached “in his name among all nations.”

The veil in the temple that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom (v. 51). From that moment to now, people have not needed a special human priesthood in order to have access to God. Animal sacrifices are no longer needed in order to approach God. Jesus makes it possible for Christians to enter boldly into the holiest by His blood (see Hebrews 10:19–22).

After Jesus had died, Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate requesting permission to remove Jesus’ body from the cross. Pilate gave his consent and Joseph, taking the body down from the cross wrapped it in fine linen and buried Jesus in his own new tomb. A stone was rolled against the opening of the sepulchre to seal it. A Roman guard was set to watch the tomb. But the grave did not hold Him. On Sunday morning Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God, and in His resurrection He is declared to be the Son of God (Rom. 1:4).

The Lord’s Supper each Sunday celebrates the crucifixion and the resurrection. It is a thanksgiving for what God has done in Christ for us. It is also a proclamation of the grace and mercy of God displayed so vividly at Calvary.

After the resurrection, Jesus spent about forty days on earth interacting from time to time with His disciples opening their understanding of the Scriptures. Jesus summarized His ministry in these words: “Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24: 46–47).

The story of the cross never grows old. The redemptive power of the blood of Jesus shed in the crucifixion is still available to wash way sins in 1995 just as it did nearly two thousand years ago. Telling the story of the cross still requires that “repentance and remission of sins” be preached “in his name among all nations.”❐

Charles Lambert worships with the church in Myrtle Beach, SC. Contact him at 3418 Longwood Lane, Conway, SC 29527.

Poison

By Michael R. Mobley

Self-pity is a deadly poison that twists your perception, defiles your attitude, and chokes the life out of your spirit. Your passion and inspiration wither away and leave your heart cold, your senses dull, and your mind blind.

Self-pity leaves you struggling with bitterness and resentment, indifference and doubts, confusion and depression.

Self-pity leaves you struggling with bitterness and resentment, indifference and doubts, confusion and depression. You become unpleasant to be with and unresponsive to the help and love offered by others, and this condition lingers until your soul is cleansed of this deadly poison.

How can the grip of self-pity be broken?

Engage God every day of your life. Study, prayer, meditation, worship, devotion, fellowship. Seek to understand God, praise Him, spend time alone with Him, then humble yourself before Him and follow His directions. God is the good Father and Jesus is the Good Shepherd (Matt. 7:7–11).

Take to heart the sincere encouragement of others. Surround yourself with and reach out to others who want to love you with the love of the Lord (Heb. 10:23–25; Col. 4:6; Phil. 2:1–4; Gal. 6:1–5).

Remember the good you have received from the Lord and the good you have been privileged to do already. Focus on the good you are given and the opportunities for today. Plan for the good yet to come (James 1:2–18).

Take forward action. Many things you may respond to with self-pity: Circumstances or life-situations, sinfulness, mistreatment from others, your own weaknesses and faults. One step at a time, one day at a time, deal with whatever is troubling you. Do not wallow in self-pity nor blind yourself with denial. Get up and do something about your circumstances (Phil. 3:1–14).

Specific situations call for specific actions and attitudes. However, these four tools will help you to rebuild your life. The focus of these truths—God and His goodness—can either shield you from the poisoned darts of self-pity or, if your soul has already been poisoned, can cleanse your heart and soul. Allow the grace and mercy of God to save and heal you not only for the world to come, but for this life also.❒

Michael R. Mobley, News Editor for Carolina Christian can be contacted at 301 Reed Creek Rd., Mooresville, NC 28115.

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Eastern North Carolina Evangelism Triangle

By N. V. Hare

THE BELL FORK ROAD CHURCH OF Christ in Jacksonville, NC has initiated a plan of evangelism called ENCET 13-2008. This plan is designed to evangelize the eastern triangle of North Carolina during the years 1995 through 2008. The triangle area reaches from Morehead City northwest to Smithfield, then southeast to Wilmington, then northeast along the coast to Morehead City. The design is to establish thirteen congregations within this triangle area, one per year, during the thirteen-year span. Each congregation would be within ten miles of each other giving community members easy access to the true doctrine of Christ.

To the maximum extent allowed, the Bell Fork congregation would enlist the efforts of any established congregation within the triangle.

Congregations will be established in the following townships: Richlands, Maysville, Holly Ridge, Hampstead, Wallace, Pink Hill, Beaulaville, Maple Hill, Trenton, Burgaw, Warsaw, Mount Olive, and Newton Grove. The establishment will not necessarily be in that order.

The plan is now underway with the acquisition of Nelson V. Hare as the Outreach Minister. Brother Hare's responsibility will be to work in a target area for a year at the end of which an established and maturing congregation should be in existence. This process will be repeated until all thirteen target locations have been evangelized.

The plan also calls for brother Hare to develop an outreach program and to train other brothers to join him in the work, along with other Christians in a given community. Once a congregation has been established and until a minister can be acquired and relocated to the area, the Bell Fork congregation will be responsible for teaching Bible classes and conducting worship.

For the third week in October 1995, Brother Hare has scheduled the International Bible College in Florence, Alabama to send twelve workers to participate in this outreach effort. These brethren will be on site for approximately one week. Plans are being made to make maximum use of their talents. To that end an effort will be made to have classes set up for them to teach. They will also work with correspondence courses and conduct gospel meetings.

The Bell Fork is soliciting the support of any and all congregations adjacent to the target area. Such support includes prayers, door-knocking, idea-sharing, and encouragement. Any support readers of *Carolina Christian* can provide this work will be greatly appreciated.☐

Contact N. V. Hare at 321 Bell Fork Road, Jacksonville, NC 28540. For more information contact either of the elders of the Bell Fork congregation: James Barnes, (919) 353-1846; Abner James, (919) 346-3003; or Marc Bowks, Sr., (919) 326-1794.

It's the Heart, Stupid!

By Phil Stapp

DURING THE 1992 PRESIDENTIAL campaign, Clinton supporters made good use of the slogan, "It's the economy, stupid!" This was an attempt to portray President Bush as one concerned more with world affairs than American jobs. To some degree, it worked. The slogan was a clever way of focusing people's attention on a perceived problem. Since the campaign, variations of the slogan have appeared. The problem is, none of the slogans are pointing at the real problem.

Politicians, special interest groups, the news media, and just about everyone else, keep pointing at things that are the cause of all our problems in America. None have pointed out the real problem yet. The problem with America is not a liberal, tax and spend congress. The problem with America is not twelve years of Reaganomics. The problem with America is not racial bigotry. The problem with America is the hearts of is citizens. Hearts that have no faith in God and no moral character.

The church is also experiencing heart problems. Unfortunately, it is a problem that God has seen before. It was present in Israel when God said through Isaiah, "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men" (Isa. 29:13). It was present again in Judah during the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel (see Jer. 12:2 and Ezek. 33:31-32) and Jesus met many who were in full cardiac arrest.

Today, fingers are pointing at problems all over the place in the church. The problem with the church is: the new hermeneutic; the old hermeneutic; tradition; contemporary forms of worship; legalism; liberalism; out of date translations of the Bible; modern perversions of the Bible; and on and on we could go. I do not wish to trivialize the situation. I believe there is a problem in the church, but we seem to be missing the point. So let me say this in all love and humility, "It's the heart, stupid!"

Jesus tells us, "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45). Let us try to apply what Jesus says to some "issues" today.

Hermeneutics is the methodology that we use to interpret scripture. Let's say that God gives us a divine, perfect hermeneutic to use in the interpretation of his Word (since all human methodologies have human imperfections). Does a perfect hermeneutic guarantee a perfect understanding and application of God's Word? No! Different people with different hearts will use God's Word in different ways.

If individuals have legalistic hearts set on binding others with the traditions and teaching of men, then that is how they will use God's perfect hermeneutic. If individuals have hearts that are seeking to justify worldly living, then that is how they will apply God's perfect hermeneutic. In contrast, a person with an open, sincere, searching heart can use a flawed human hermeneutic and still discover God's will.

Worship is that special time when humans come into the presence of the Holy in humility, praise and adoration. Yet some hearts come to worship expecting to be entertained. Others come to fulfill a requirement. Still others come to show God how well they can perform the rituals. All are useless to God. Real worship comes from a humble heart that approaches God in Spirit and in truth.

We have tended to focus so much on issues, opinions and how things are done that we tend to over look the real problem. Whatever problems we are having in the church all begin in the hearts of men and women (with some help from Satan). When we turn to God with humble hearts, then God's power will be able to work in us. Problems will not cease to exist, but we will be able to overcome them with God's help.

David was not perfect. He lied, cheated, committed adultery and murder. Yet he is described as a man after God's own heart. Why? Because of a heart that always returned to God in complete humility and repentance. His was a heart that responded to God.

The problems in the church today will not be solved through debates. They will not be solved even if we could come to an agreement on every issue. They will only be solved through transformed hearts that respond to God. There is hope. We may be suffering from heart problems now, but thank God, the great physician is a cardiologist.

Phil Stapp is the pupit minister for the Brewer Road church in Winston-Salem. Contact him at 2010 Brewer Road, Winston-Salem, NC 27127.

Brotherhood News

By Michael R. Mobley

THOMASVILLE, NC...As the result of a month-long special effort to reach the lost, Walt Leaver of David Lipscomb University and minister for the Antioch Church of Christ in Nashville, TN, will conduct an outreach effort October 8–11. The focus of the meeting will be "What it means to be a part of the family of God." MOCKSVILLE, NC...Carolina Bible Camp's Food Lion Shopping Days are scheduled for November 13–15. Food Lion will donate to CBC & Retreat Center 5% of the total qualifying purchases (less taxes). For more information, contact Judy or Elizabeth Swicegood, 1662 Jericho Church Road, Mocksville, NCVILLE, NC...MVILLE, NC...The Third Annual Church Leadership Seminar will be held October 27–28 at Carolina Bible Camp and Retreat Center, Inc. Dr. Randall Harris will be the featured speaker and his focus will be "Spiritual Disciplines for Church Leadership." For more information, contact Phil Kinzer, Church of Christ, 4900 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28226 or call 704-364-0748. WILMINGTON, NC...The Pine Valley Church of Christ announces its Fall Youth Rally for 1995. The theme will be "No Fear!" featuring guest speakers and entertainment from David Lipscomb University. The dates for the Rally are October 13–15. For details, contact the church at 3601 College Road, Wilmington, NC 28409 or telephone 919-791-2555. LAURINBURG, NC...A few families from the congregation in Rockingham with a few families living in the Laurinburg area have committed themselves to establishing a congregation of the Lord's church in Laurinburg. They are seeking the prayers of all the brethren inthe Carolinas. Add the following address to your Church Directory: PO Box 98, Laurinburg, NC 28353-0098. Telephone: 910-276-2120.❐

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Carolina Christian

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(ISSN 0008-672X)
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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Road, Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: individual—$8/year ($15/2 years and $22/3 years); club of five or more—$7.50 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles—50¢/copy/month, or church mailing list (minimum 15) 60¢/copy/month.

Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes with Form 3579 to:
Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Address editorial matter to:
Dennis Conner
PO Box 1369
Yadkinville, NC 27055-1369

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All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 10.

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Editorial

By Johnny R. Melton

CONDITIONS IN THE CHURCH haven't changed much over the years. Issues come and go, one heresy gives way to another, but attitudes, unfortunately, do not appear to change as readily. Nearly two thousand years later, the church continues to be plagued with those whom Paul described in 1 Timothy 1 as promoting "controversies rather than God's work" (vs. 4). While God's work "is by faith" (vs. 4) and has as its "goal" "love which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (vs. 5), the chilling truth is that there remain today those who "have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk. They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm" (vss. 6–7).

Jude also recognized the impact of the ungodly in the church. He described them as "grumblers and faultfinders" who "follow their own evil desires," and "boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage" (Jude 16).

The reality is that the conditions described by Jude were anticipated by the apostles and warnings were sounded. Jude cites the apostolic warning: "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." Jude further identifies these "scoffers" as "men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit" (vs. 19).

Such people can be found in the church on both sides of most issues. For instance, the issue of "change" is a hot button in many churches. There are those who resist change to the point of dividing the Body of Christ because they are following "their own ungodly desires" and their "natural instincts" to keep things as they have always been. On the other hand, there are "change agents" who disregard Scripture, especially the Golden Rule, and seek to impose changes that disrupt and divide because they, too, are following "mere natural instincts" and "their own ungodly desires." Such people, Jude says, "do not have the Spirit."

In the face of such circumstances one does well to return to the goal of Paul's command that certain ones should not "teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies." Paul explains, "The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5).

This focus on love is a dominant theme for Paul. He says in Galatians 5:6, "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." In that same context, Paul warns about the abuse of spiritual freedom, "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other" (Gal. 5:13–15).

Within the church this warning must be heeded: "If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other." The antidote for this malady is a healthy dose of love.

In calling for his readers to "contend for the faith," Jude explained to them how they were to carry out his exhortation: "But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh" (vss. 20–23).

It is impossible to show love and mercy to others unless we are keeping ourselves in close contact with the ultimate source of all love and mercy—our loving Heavenly Father. The spiritual climate in our churches would greatly improve were more of us to concentrate on building ourselves up in our most holy faith. Notice the personal character of this faith. The King James and the American Standard translations have exactly the same wording "building up yourselves on your most holy faith." The New American Standard Bible alters the word order slightly, "building yourselves up on your most holy faith." Hugo McCord translates it, "build yourselves up in your most sacred faith." No serious student of Scripture denies that there is an objective body of doctrine referred to as "the faith." However, we must recognize that the objective character of "the faith" means little if there is not an intensely subjective commitment to it.

No serious student of Scripture denies that there is an objective body of doctrine referred to as "the faith." However, we must recognize that the objective character of "the faith" means little if there is not an intensely subjective commitment to it.

Faced with challenges to the faith from within and without, both Paul and Jude maintained confidence in God's ability to save. Both were moved to worship. Paul declared, "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim. 1:15–17).

Jude exclaimed, "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen" (vss. 24–25).

As I set aside the editorial responsibilities I have borne for the past two and a half years, my prayer for my brothers and sisters in the Carolinas is that you love one another with pure hearts fervently, and that you draw near to God in true worship and praise. With such commitments the future of the church will be secure while we wait with patience and joyous expectation for the Lord's return.

Johnny Melton now serves as Pulpit Minister for the Old Aberdeen Road church in West Point, MS. Contact him at 514 Converse Drive, West Point, MS 39773-3307.

Associate Editorial

Why People Choose a Church

By Jim Mullican

IN ONE SURVEY OF VARIOUS religious groups, people were asked why they had initially chosen to worship with that particular congregation. Their responses are not surprising.

- 2% came because a stranger knocked on their doors.
- 3% came because of a church program that interested them.
- 5% came because of the preacher.
- 5% came because the Bible school subject interested them.
- 5% just walked in, choosing the church at random.
- 80% came because of family or friends who were already members and had invited them to come.

While the people in this survey may be less inhibited about shifting from one religious group to another then we are, it still shows the importance of a personal invitation by family and friends in leading them to Jesus.

A different survey among churches of Christ in the Houston, Texas, area in 1985 asked those visiting a congregation for the first time to give their reason for visiting. Again, these are mostly non-members, the very people we should be the most anxious to reach.

- 9% said they came because the building and grounds were attractive.
- 14% said they came because they had attended a church of Christ regularly somewhere else.
- 18% came because the location was convenient to their homes.
- 22% said they came because people they respected attended that congregation.
- 34% came because they were invited by friends or neighbors.

We have told ourselves that people don't want the truth and perhaps have soothed our consciences for not carrying out the Great Commission, but both personal experience and nation-wide surveys indicate that this is not so.

Adding these last two figures together indicates that 56% of those who visited the services of that congregation did so because of the influence or invitation of the members. We might very well assume that the pattern holds true for most of our congregations.

Many of the mainline denominations are being plagued by the inroads of liberalism. Many have already fully embraced it. Homosexuals are being ordained into the ministry. Abortion is being condoned. The Bible is being ignored. While some are content with all this, there is a multitude in the various denominations who still want to hear the Bible preached and who are looking for what churches of Christ have to offer. We have told ourselves that people don't want the truth and perhaps have soothed our consciences for not carrying out the Great Commission, but both personal experience and nation-wide surveys indicate that this is not so.

A Gallup Poll published in USA Today in 1989 found that the American public is extremely religious and has remained so over the past fifty years. It found that...

- 94% believe in God.
- 90% pray.
- 75% say their religious involvement has been a positive experience.
- 42% "went to church last week" in 1988, compared with 41% in 1937.
- 15% read the Bible daily in 1988, compared with 10% in 1942.

The fact is, we need to hear the words of Jesus, "I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (John 4:35, NIV). We need to be sure we continue to invite people and continue to teach people the pure message of Jesus. That's the real secret of church growth. 📖

Jim serves as Associate Editor of Carolina Christian. *He is an elder as well as the preacher for the Central Haywood church in Clyde. Contact him at RR 4 Box 30-A, Clyde, NC 28721.*

Antioch, a Model Church

By Dennis Conner

THE CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS AS reported in what we know today as Acts 10 had been a great breakthrough for the gospel. The first unsettling implications of what God had done in Caesarea had been dealt with by the leaders in the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:1-18). It was agreed that the Gentiles, too, were meant to be included in the kingdom. But it's one thing to be included in the same kingdom with the Gentiles; it's quite another to sit next to them and worship with them in the same assembly. Would it be possible for Jews and Gentiles to truly worship with one another? That would be the real test of the gospel's inclusiveness, and the test would come perhaps sooner than the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem had anticipated.

Some of the believers who had been driven from Jerusalem by the persecution following Stephen's death made their way to Antioch, 300 miles from Jerusalem. Antioch was a significant Roman city and would prove to be of even greater significance for the spread of Christianity. A church resulted from the preaching and teaching of the bold believers formerly of Jerusalem. And what a church it was! Both Jews and Gentiles responded to the gospel, and there they were in Antioch worshipping side by side.

Again, the news of God's amazing work reached the leaders back in Jerusalem. Immediately they dispatched Barnabas to check things out. Upon his arrival Barnabas was overjoyed to see what God's grace had done. Barnabas was God's man for the moment, helping Antioch to develop into a great church; a model church that we would do well to imitate even today. The church in Antioch possessed many of the characteristics of an authentic Christian community.

First, *it was evangelistic in nature.* Luke writes, "But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord." The church was conceived in the evangelistic fervor of the committed disciples who had come from Jerusalem. They had come preaching and sharing, and God had blessed their faithfulness. But not only was the establishing of the church in Antioch the result of evangelistic excitement; further, the church would continue in the understanding that its primary purpose was to share the good news of Christ. Later, it would be the church to send Paul out on his first missionary journey. As the church grew and developed it would not lose sight of how it came to be, and why it came to be.

The church in Antioch spent little time contemplating its navel! Instead, it looked outwardly to the needs of the lost and to the needs of the suffering in Judea. When churches turn their focus inward, and leave it there, they soon become self-absorbed and wilt away in their self-centeredness.

Second, *it was Christ-centered in lifestyle.* It was in Antioch that "the disciples were first called Christians." Scholars are divided as to the origin of this name. Some have supposed that it was a name originally coined in derision of Jesus' disciples. Others have suggested that it was a name divinely given to the believers. There is little or no direct evidence to support either conclusion. What we can safely assume is that, one way or the other, the name reflects what others saw in the lives of this faith community. They must have come to wear the name of Christ because it was evident that their lives were full of Christ! "Christian" marked the disciples as being the people of Christ Jesus. Christ was at the center of both individual and corporate life in Antioch.

Third, *the church was compassionate.* In Acts 11:28 the prophet Agabus spoke to the church of a great famine that was coming. When it did come, bringing hunger to Judea, the Antioch church responded immediately with a contribution for the relief of their hurting brethren. Each of the believers, according to income and blessing, determined to help. They recognized that they were part of God's family, and His family was not limited to Antioch. It was inevitable that those who truly followed Christ would also have the heart of Christ toward the hurting. True disciples of the compassionate Christ imitate the compas-

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sion of Christ.

Finally, *it was a united church.* Don't forget that for the first time Jews and Gentiles were worshipping and serving together. The church in Antioch was able to stand by the new truth of the inclusiveness of the gospel and survive. What was going on in Antioch was truly revolutionary in this sense. Thus, Antioch demonstrated that the church was indeed to be a new society in which the barriers and boundaries of traditional human society were no longer divisively binding. Antioch was proof of God's reconciling power.

The Antioch church, then, presented a complete witness to the dying city and world around it. Everything about this church spoke of the power of God's saving work. As we in the modern church, in turn, strive to present a complete witness to our communities and world, we must keep the following principles in focus.

First of all we, like Antioch, must never lose sight of the grace of God. When Barnabas arrived he "witnesses the grace of God" and "rejoiced." The greatest commitment grows out of a sense of wonder at what God has done in Christ. To serve out of a deep and abiding love for God's goodness and mercy gives a freshness to everything we do, keeps our motives pure, and keeps the fires of commitment burning brightly.

Also, our local churches must develop an outward focus. The church in Antioch spent little time contemplating its navel! Instead, it looked outwardly to the needs of the lost and to the needs of the suffering in Judea. When churches turn their focus inward, and leave it there, they soon become self-absorbed and wilt away in their self-centeredness.

Third, we must continually strive to keep Christ at the center. The question is, do people, in fact, see in us a people who truly model Jesus? And is Christ the focus of our message and ministry?

In other words, does the name "Christian" really apply?

And then, we must ever strive to be a demonstration of the truth that God has made of us all one new man. A key element of our witness to the world is that here, in the church, it matters not what your background is, where you have come from, what you have done with your life in the past, or what your race is. The societal barriers that have kept people apart no longer apply here.

When we look at what Luke shares about the church in Antioch, we see in her all the marks of an authentic witnessing church. If ever a church could be, Antioch was truly a church to be imitated. Will we?

Dennis Conner serves the church in Yadkinville, NC. He has ben named Intrim Editor of Carolina Christian. *He may be contacted at RR 6 Box 697, Yadkinville 27055.*

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Courage to Begin Again

By Phil Kinzer

JOHN CALLENDER WAS AN OFFICER under George Washington during the Revolutionary War. He failed miserably during the battle of Bunker Hill and was dismissed from the army for behaving like a coward. On his papers, General Washington wrote: “Cowardice, a crime of all others most injurious, and the last to be forgiven.”

To his credit, Callender allowed his shame to move him to try to make up what he had done and to redeem his good name. So he re-enlisted in the army as a private and so conducted himself in the battle of Long Island that Washington reinstated him as a captain and revoked his earlier sentence.

NOBODY GOES THROUGH LIFE WITHOUT EPISODES OF WEAKNESS, FAILURE, AND HUMILIATION. THOSE WITH THE COURAGE TO BEGIN AGAIN ARE PEOPLE TO BE ADMIRED.

The story of John Callender has a lesson in it for all of us. Nobody goes through life without episodes of weakness, failure, and humiliation. Those with the courage to begin again are people to be admired.

It isn’t easy to be honest with yourself about sin. The human tendency is to be defensive and proud. But God teaches us that such a spirit hinders recovery. “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. ... Grieve, mourn, and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up” (James 4:6, 9–10).

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In spite of difficulty in beginning again, there is a way to learn from past failures and to achieve successes that might have been impossible otherwise. This time you know the things to avoid, the temptations that can turn you aside from your goal, and the weaknesses within yourself. You can now take steps to guarentee success in the new effort.

Nobody ever failed more miserably than Peter. He was a chosen apostle, special friend to the Lord, and a leader among his peers. But he fled when Jesus was arrested and denied him three times later the same evening. When Jesus later gave Peter the chance to begin again, he took it, and made the best of it.

Look at your situation. Are you grieving over failure, sin, or confusion in your life? Then have the courage to throw yourself in the mercy of God. He will forgive. Then begin again.

Phil is the Pulpit Minister for the Providence Road church in Charlotte. Contact him at 4900 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28226.

Transformation

By Amos Allen

ONE OF MY FAVORITE MOVIES IS *Good-bye, Mr. Chips*. A very dry teacher in an English prep school meets a lovely lady who sings for a living. Her personality is the opposite of his in most every way, and yet they eventually marry.

The lady brings out the best in the school teacher. He becomes very popularwith the students as a teacher. The subjects are the same, but now he oozes with life and joy. He even begins to like the students more as his love for her grows.

Tragically, they are separated when she dies in an air raid during World War II. The school teacher is devastated, and yet, he has learned something about living. She is gone, but through her love he has been changed.

It's just a movie, but it does remind us that people can change. The sacrifice of Jesus depends on it. God enables us to respond to love and thus be transformed.

Let me tell you about my friend Jeff. Jeff is a prisoner. He is 27 years old, but has spent the last nine years in prison. Jeff knows that he is there because he did something wrong. Every day he is reminded of what he did and of what society thinks about it.

Yet, Jeff is a free man. For the past nine years he has also believed Jesus, and that has proved to be a liberating relationship. Jeff is a living demonstration of the power of Jesus to rescue us from our pitiful, meaningless lives. In a place that dehumanizes, that suffocates and restricts, Jeff has discovered how to serve, how to hope, and how to trust. This is no movie; rather, it is the real life of a man being transformed by God.

Most of us struggle with our own transformation. We feel guilty and ashamed at our secret sins. We beg God forhelp and we hope no one discovers just how ungodly we are. I am reminded of Peter and Paul and their struggles.

God...is so committed to our transformation that He stays with us constantly and provides instruction and guidance. He instructs us to keep looking at Jesus.

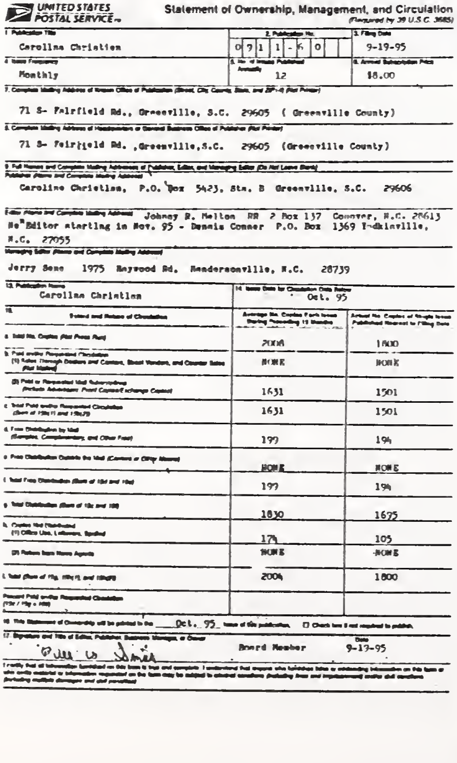
What did Peter feel as he thought about how he had abandoned Jesus? What did Paul think as he looked back at the way he had treated Christians? Did they both feel a crushing, unforgiveable guilt? Did both make plans to do all they could to pay for their sins? Maybe so, but Jesus had other ideas.

Jesus encountered both of them and they came away forgiven. He communicated acceptance. Their sins were not ignored, but neither were they used to "browbeat" the men. Instead, they both broke free. They were filled with their own passion to forgive, to see others as God does, to redeem what appeared to be worthless and to be like Jesus. Guilt alone did not motivate them—faith did. The prospect of shame did not keep them in line—hope did. Fear did not fill their hearts—love did.

God knows what we are like. He has seen us at our worse, and that is when He sent Jesus. Now, He asks that we respond to His love, and keep on responding. He is so committed to our transformation that He stays with us constantly and provides instruction and guidance. He instructs us to keep looking at Jesus.

I am the product of many people that God worked through as they revealed to me the beauty and power of living in God's presence. They were transformed and chose to share with others like me the life—changing power of God's love. They all know that in the love of Jesus there is the power to be changed. Will you let Him change you?🕮

Amos Allen preaches for the Meadowbrook Rd. church in Asheboro, NC. Contact him at 631 Meadowbrook Road, Asheboro, NC 27203.



UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Publication Title Carolina Christian	2. Publication No. 0 9 1 1 - 6 0	3. Filing Date 9-19-95
4. Issue Frequency Monthly	5. No. of Issues Published Annually 12	6. Annual Subscription Price $8.00

7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Street, City, County, State, and ZIP+4) (Not Printer)

71 S. Fairfield Rd., Greenville, S.C. 29605 (Greenville County)

8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not Printer)

71 S. Fairfield Rd. ,Greenville,S.C. 29605 (Greenville County)

9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do Not Leave Blank)

Publisher (Name and Complete Mailing Address)

Carolina Christian, P.O. Box 5423, Sta. B Greenville, S.C. 29606

Editor (Name and Complete Mailing Address) Johnny R. Melton RR 2 Box 137 Conover, N.C. 28613
New Editor starting in Nov. 95 - Dennis Conner P.O. Box 1369 Yadkinville, N.C. 27055

Managing Editor (Name and Complete Mailing Address)

Jerry Sene 1975 Haywood Rd. Hendersonville, N.C. 28739

13. Publication Name	14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below	
Carolina Christian	Oct. 95	
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total No. Copies (Net Press Run)	2004	1800
b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation (1) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, and Counter Sales (Not Mailed)	NONE	NONE
(2) Paid or Requested Mail Subscriptions (Include Advertisers' Proof Copies/Exchange Copies)	1631	1501
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Sum of 15b(1) and 15b(2))	1631	1501
d. Free Distribution by Mail (Samples, Complimentary, and Other Free)	199	194
e. Free Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or Other Means)	NONE	NONE
f. Total Free Distribution (Sum of 15d and 15e)	199	194
g. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15f)	1830	1695
h. Copies Not Distributed (1) Office Use, Leftovers, Spoiled	174	105
(2) Return from News Agents	NONE	NONE
i. Total (Sum of 15g, 15h(1), and 15h(2))	2004	1800
Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15c / 15g x 100)		

16. This Statement of Ownership will be printed in the Oct. 95 issue of this publication. ☐ Check box if not required to publish.

17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner

Board Member

Date 9-13-95

In the Triune Image of God

By Paul E. Jarrett

THE TERM "TRINITY" DOES NOT appear in Scripture. It was probably first employed by Tertullian in the 2nd century (*Unger's Bible Dictionary).* However, it was used to describe a scriptural belief held among Christians from the beginning of Christianity. The English word trinity comes from the Latin word *trinitas* and the Greek word *trias* and is used to describe the biblical concept of God in three persons.

Those who take issue with the doctrine of the Trinity do so because they understand it to be a denial of monotheism and a denigration of God. In defense of the Trinity, I would like to suggest that this concept is not a denial of God's nature, rather it is an attempt (albeit feeble) on the part of finite man to come to a clearer understanding of the true nature of the infinite God.

When properly understood, the concept of the Trinity does not deny monotheism, neither does it denigrate God. Instead, it provides a clearer insight into the true nature of the God in whose image we are made. By equipping us with a greater appreciation of God's nature, we are better prepared to exhibit His nature in our own conduct.

While the word does not appear in Scripture, the concept of the "Trinity" is clearly exhibited in the numerous references to the Father, the Son (or Word), and the Holy Spirit. Even when one rejects on text critical grounds the reference in 1 John 5:7 to "the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost," and grants the possibility that Matthew 28:19's reference to "the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" may be an instance of a scribal gloss, so that a later baptismal formula was incorporated into the text, one still is left with overwhelming evidence that the triune nature of the Godhead is taught in Scripture.

While the concept of the Trinity is more readily apparent in the New Testament, it is not absent from the Old Testament. The sanctity of the number three, the plural form of *elohim*(the Hebrew word for *God*), and those instances in which Deity is spoken of as conversing with Himself, are but three examples of such proof (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*). This latter case is seen in Genesis 1:26–27, where we learn that God said "Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness...and God created man in His own image" (NASB, italics added). It has long been my contention that we cannot truly understand our Divine nature, unless we appreciate the triune nature of God.

> *The concept of the Trinity is one of the great mysteries of Scripture. To understand it perfectly would require finite minds to have perfect grasp of the infinite, which is, of course, impossible.*

I believe it is essential that, while recognizing God as One (cf. Deut. 6:4), we must recognize that His oneness concerns relationship and not singularity. This concept of oneness is critical to understanding unity in marriage, the church, with our fellowman, and with God. An abiding appreciation for the triune nature of God is at the heart of Jesus' prayer for unity when he requested "that they all may be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us" (John 17:21, NASB).

When God is understood to be a God of relationship, we are better equipped to achieve the image in which we are created. If we understand God to be a singular entity, we are more likely to manifest the kind of focus on self that lies at the root of all sin. In coming to show us the Father, Jesus set aside the false notion of equality with God as a thing to be grasped (cf. Phil. 2:6) to which Adam and Eve had fallen victim (Gen. 3:4–6), and He exhibited to us the greater beauty of "oneness with God" in terms of will, purpose, and work (see John 5:19, 44; 6:38, 39; 8:28,29; 14:7–11).

The concept of the Trinity is one of the great mysteries of Scripture. To understand it perfectly would require finite minds to have perfect grasp of the infinite, which is, of course, impossible. However, what we cannot fully understand, we can (and must) accept by faith, as we strive to be One with the Father. This oneness with the Father comes by means of recognizing that "there is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4–6).

Paul serves the Archdale church in Charlotte as Pulpit Minister. Contact him at 1824 Tamworth Drive, Charlotte, NC 28210.

Hey, Charlie!

By Charles R. Lambert

WHEN I WAS TEN YEARS OLD, I lived by Winyah Bay in Georgetown County. I had a good friend who came to see me one evening. We were just running around the yard playing. Each of us had a BB gun. One of us came up with the idea to do some night hunting. Well, in order to do that you had to have not only a gun, but also a flashlight.

My friend and I were alone, except for Bertha, a lady who worked part-time for my mother. Bertha was like a mother to me; I had to obey her while my mother and father were out of town. She was a good old soul, and when I asked for my dad's flashlight, she thought it was all right, and gave it to me. My friend and I took the flashlight and headed outside. It was almost dark and the batteries in the flashlight were almost dead. That situation had to be remedied.

As my friend and I pondered what to do, one of us remembered having heard that you could heat flashlight batteries and they would charge right up. We discussed the matter briefly and decided to put the batteries in the kitchen oven—just to warm them up. Once the batteries were in the oven, and the oven was turned on, my friend and I went outside to practice shooting our BB guns.

About thirty minutes later—having long since forgotten about the batteries—we were startled by a terrible explosion erupting from the kitchen. Bertha ran to the door and cried out, "Hey, Charlie! Come here, boy!" She was scared nearly to death, and so were my friend and I, but we didn't know what had happened. That is, until we found the oven door blown half off.

Immediately, I thought, "What is going to happen when Mom and Dad come home?" I began to beg Bertha to not tell, although it was quite obvious that a small bomb had gone off in the kitchen. Bertha never told on me, but she did let my Mom squeeze the truth out of me, a little at a time. And, for sure, I was punished.

Punishment is a biblical issue, and so my Mom was following God's will when she punished me. The first punishment mentioned in the Bible involved Adam and Eve being driven from the Garden of Eden for eating of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which God had forbidden them to do. Because of this sin, God said to Eve, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16). To Adam God said, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:17–19). God even punished the snake. To the serpent He said, "Because thou hast done this, thou art

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cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:14–15).

The next occasion of punishment in the Bible has to do with Cain and Abel. When God accepted Abel's sacrifice and rejected his own, Cain was infuriated. In anger Cain arose and killed Able. God pronounced punishment on Cain saying, "And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth" (Gen. 4:11–12).

These examples of punishment in the Bible remind us that punishment is ultimately something between man and God. God will punish evil doers. No one will have to tell on anyone. God is able to discern not only the deeds we do in our bodies, whether good or evil (2 Cor. 5:10), but He also knows "the thoughts and intents of our hearts" (Heb. 4:12, and especially, 13). The Good News is that Jesus has taken our punishment on Himself. He went to the cross and there He was punished for sins He did not commit. That's the Gospel.

We can either take the punishment for sin (which is spiritual death—eternal separation from God), or we can let Jesus take the punishment for us. Jesus takes our punishment when we, in faith, turn from sin in repentance, confess His name, and submit to baptism in His name. What will you do?📖

Charlie Lambert worships with the church in Myrtle Beach, SC. He often uses stories from his childhood to illustrate biblical principles in brief talks he makes in "extending the invitation." Contact him at 3418 Longwood Lane, Conway, SC 29527.

Women's Role in the Church

By Burl Curtis

WHILE I WAS PREACHING AT Augusta Road in Greenville, South Carolina, some brethren from Lenoir City, Tennessee visited one of our worship assemblies. Later, we recieved a letter from them gently correcting us for using a woman to lead prayer in the public assembly. I wrote back, and got some of the men to sign the letter, stating that women leading prayer was unheard of among churches of Christ in the Carolinas. All I could ever fighure out was that one of our young men, who was a Christian, had led a prayer, and they thought they were hearing a woman.

May 28 through June 18, 1961 the churches in Greenville held the Fogarty Tent Meeting (*Carolina Messenger of Truth*, Vol. III, No. 5). Because of extensive advertising in the local newspapers, one of the religious editors was willing to come and do a story about the meeting. (I remember his name being Gil Rowland; but I have learned that my memory is not always accurate.) The night he came some were baptized under the tent by Ernest Thigpen, a dedicated and upright preacher. When the article appeared, the religious editor reported that a woman had done the baptizing. I never knew why he thought Ernest was a woman.

Now I ask this question: Why did we not permit women to lead public prayer and to baptize? It was not because women were not capable. Other Christian women could verify that women were able to lead beautiful and appropriate prayers in ladies' meetings. Children heard them lead prayers in classes. Many women would be physically strong enough to baptize, if such were pleasing to the Lord.

It was not because the men in the congregations thought this was just a cultural thing or a tradition of men. If anything, they cared less about culture, society, and custom at that time than some do today, and since many of them had to break with the religions of their fathers, they cared less about the traditions of men. They knew they could "transgress the commandment of God by their tradition" (Matt. 15:3), and their "worship would be in vain" if they taught "for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9).

It was because Jesus chose men—not women—to be apostles and evangelists. In Acts 1:11, the Apostles are referred to as "men of Galilee" and their names are given in verse 13. Since the women were present (v. 14), this would have been an excellent opportunity for the Lord to have chosen a woman to take Judas's place, had He desired to do so. But no woman was considered. Peter speaking to the disciples said, "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out amoung us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:21–22). They then appointed two men and the Lord chose one, Matthias, and he (not she) was numbered with the eleven apostles. All of the New Testament books were written by men. What was true of the Apostles was true of all the church leaders in the early church. All evangelists, elders, and deacons were men.

Another reason for restricting the role of women was that we had read in the Bible the words of Paul, "As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says" (1 Cor. 14:33b–34). We knew this was not just from Paul, although that would have been proof enough (since he was an inspired Apostle), for we had continued to read, "If any one thinks he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord" (v. 37). We knew the seriousness of violating this teaching. "If any one does not recognize this, he is not recognized" (v. 38). We understood the condemnation placed on those who were not recognized by the Lord. He said, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23).

Furthermore, we knew Timothy had received instruction from the Apostle Paul that a woman was not permitted to teach or have authority over men; "she must be silent" (1 Tim. 2:12). Yet we know that this did not apply to private teaching or the teaching of other women, for the same Apostle taught that older women are to teach the younger women (Titus 2:3–4).

All believers in Christ should be able to unite in the truth that Christian men are to lead. Why should the church be divided over women's leadership roles which are being advocated by some today? My plea would be that godly women everywhere "hold the line" and not allow themselves to be "pushed" into leadership and thus displease the Lord.

Burl Curtis a former Carolinas preacher, as well as a former editor of Carolina Christian *may be contacted at Searcy, AR.*

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Reconciliation

By Tim Sensing

WHAT DOES GOD WANT? WE LIVE in a world that desires to gratify every fancy under the sun. We want our needs met. We want our needs met now. We want our needs met luxuriously. The phrase, "I want" should be translated, "I need it now." The darkest corner of selfishness is seen in the "I want" syndrome becoming "I am owed" syndrome. But what does God want?

- I believe God created us to have relationship with us. God is a communal being deeply desiring friendship with His creation.
- I believe sin, yours and mine, separated us from God. Relationship was broken and cannot be re-established by our efforts.
- I believe God initiated salvation before the foundations of the world were created. God ultimately extended salvation to His creation by sacrificing His one and only Son on a cross so that our sins could be forgiven. In Christ, God has accomplished what is necessary to heal our broken relationship with him.
- I believe salvation is a door we enter to begin our journey back into the embrace of God. In baptism, we are re-created in the image of God. Through sanctification, holy living, and worship, we are being transformed into the image of His Son. Salvation is where relationship with God begins.
- I believe, someday, we will once again experience wholeness in our fellowship with the Father. The Christian life is but a journey and a sweet taste of the future.

What does God want? Reconciliation. God desires to re-establish peace with His creation. *We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.* (2 Cor. 5:21).

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:17–21).🕮

Tim Sensing is the Pulpit Minister for the Mebane Street church in Burlington and a frequent contributor to Carolina Christian. Contact him at PO Box 1861, Burlington, NC 27215-1861.

Called to Suffer

By Paul Jackson

SUFFERING IS NOT SOMETHING that we like to talk about. In fact, it turns most of us off. It embarrasses us. Somehow, it robs us of the right words to say when we are in its presence. For the most part, the only association we make between suffering and life is that suffering is to be relieved or alleviated.

Our zeal to alleviate suffering often brings an unfortunate side-effect. It becomes difficult for us to identify with people who suffer and to enter into their situation. We assume that every problem has a solution. Suffering is a problem; therefore, there must be a solution close at hand. The result is that we are quick to point an assuming finger at the one who is suffering.

Have you ever pointed an assuming finger? Plead guilty if you have ever thought that people who suffer must be ignorant, lazy, incompetent or immoral. Do you remember the reaction Job's friends had to his suffering? Even the apostle Paul encountered those with an assuming finger. The life of hardship and suffering he endured was detestable to many of the Corinthians who favored their glorious experiences over the suffering of a man of God (2 Cor. 11:24–27; 12:1–10).

And Paul certainly was not the only one who suffered. Peter suffered, James suffered, and so did John. In fact, suffering seems to have been a common experience of many Christians in the first century. There appears to have been something profoundly exciting about suffering in the minds and hearts of God's servants.

I believe the apostle Peter expressed best what that something was when he wrote, "...if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. *For you have been called for this purpose,* since Christ also suffered for you, *leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps"* (1 Pet. 2:20b–21, italics added). If this sounds a bit strange to us, then perhaps we need to come to grips with what Peter meant by suffering.

In the Bible, the word "suffer" often points to something purely passive. It sometimes means "allow." Matthew 19:14 reads, "Suffer the little children to come to me" (KJV). But suffer doesn't always mean allow. Many times it portrays intense action. Just look at Calvary and see the suffering of Jesus Christ as He hung on the cross. From that view, Peter intended for us to realize that we, too, may suffer, just as intensely as Christ suffered. His death on that cross was one of active involvement. He suffered passionately. Consequently, we often speak of the "passion of Christ" and "the suffering of Christ" interchangeably. Passion or suffering in Peter's mind denoted intense action. That's why it wasn't strange for him to refer to the Christian vocation as a "call to suffer." He realized, as did Paul, that "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:29).

The inevitable question, however, is "Why?" Peter's answer was expressed in terms of Christ's suffering. He said we are to suffer "because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example...." Peter was writing to Christians who were suffering severe persecution and were asking "Why?" The suffering of Christ was held up to them as an example. To Peter, Jesus was supremely the Suffering One: His suffering defined all suffering and gave it direction and purpose. All who suffer for righteousness' sake as they share the suffering which He endured, should confront it in the same spirit which Christ displayed.

No longer should the Christian see suffering as aimless or futile, a hindrance to be shunned. It is not the result of blind chance, nor is it the torment inflicted by an unfeeling fate. Rather, suffering is a way of life that has been consecrated by the sufferings of Christ Himself. It has been transformed into something meaningful. It has become a privilege given by God to be used in His service (Phil. 1:29). In short, it is something that one actively engages in —just like Jesus.

James H. Burtness has said that Christian suffering "means entering into the lives of those who suffer and sharing their suffering. It means to take another's suffering and to make it one's own. It means to care enough about the suffering of another man to do something about it. It means to risk one's own security in order to be at the side of another suffering human being. It means to quit being embarrassed by suffering, and to begin to embrace suffering—wherever one finds it, in whomever one finds it, under whatever circumstances one finds it—knowing that to embrace one who suffers is to embrace Jesus Christ himself, who suffered for us and called us to follow in his steps." Instead of viewing suffering like the plague, or with an attitude of "grin and bear it," we can now "exult in tribulations" (Rom. 5:3). We can even "weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15). We know that we are truly blessed in suffering (1 Pet. 3:14), and through it all we can glorify God (1 Pet, 4:16). And we can say, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of his body in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions (Col. 1:24).

This certainly is not a call to suffer in an ascetic sense. It is a call to suffer as part of the discipline of living out our faith. Only Christians tested and proved in this way are mature (James 1:2–12). Suffering can be borne creatively and redemptively. We must, however, look to our example and remember, "If Christ suffered, what gives us the right to expect any different?"🕮

Paul Jackson preaches for the Helen St. church in Fayetteville, NC. Contact him at 500 Helen Street, Fayetteville, NC 28303.

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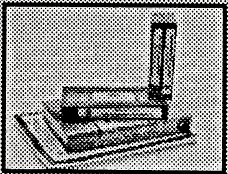

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL. 37, NO. 11 NOVEMBER 1995

It is good to give
thanks to the LORD, for his
love endures for ever.
Let Israel say:
“His love endures for ever.”
Let the house of Aaron say:
“His love endures for ever.”
Let those who fear the
LORD say:
“His love endures for ever.
—Psalm 118:1-4

Carolina Christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
EDITORIAL & PUBLICATION STAFF
Dennis Conner, Interim Editor
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
Jim Mullican, Associate Editor
Michael Mobley, News Editor

CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Road, Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: individual—$8/year ($15/2 years and $22/3 years); club of five or more—$7.50 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles—50¢/copy/month, or church mailing list (minimum 15) 60¢/copy/month.

Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes with Form 3579 to:
Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Address editorial matter to:
Dennis Conner
PO Box 1369
Yadkinville, NC 27055-1369

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Michael Mobley
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All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 10.

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Editorial

By Dennis Conner

THERE IS A BANK HERE IN the Piedmont of North Carolina that has chosen in its TV commercials to advertise its cautiousness. They want you to know that they are not going to play fast and loose with your money if you invest it with them. They employ a strategy of fiscal caution. I can't really find much fault with that strategy, so long as we are talking about money (especially my money). But if we are talking about faith, that is another matter, as illustrated in what is often called "the parable of the talents" in Matthew 25:14–30.

The parable is the last of three told by Jesus in response to the apostles' questions regarding the end time and judgment. He is preparing them for His departure. For a period of time Jesus would be an absentee Lord (in the sense of His physical presence), but He would be coming back. The point of this parable is to tell the disciples how He wanted them to live in the interim. Today, of course, we find ourselves still waiting, so the story is for us as well. It speaks to us, too, about being the agents of an absentee Lord, and about how we are to live the life of faith in the meantime.

Here's what the kingdom of heaven is like. A man is getting ready to travel to a distant land. Before leaving, he calls his servants together and distributes his goods to them. To one he gave five talents, to another he gave two talents, and finally, to a third he gave one. The first servant was a shrewd trader and soon had doubled his money. The second servant was opportunistic as well and also doubled that which had been entrusted to him. The third servant, however, chose what seemed to him the safest and most cautious route. The others might want to play the market and risk their masters anger if they lost it all, but not this servant. Mr. Cautious was his name. There was never any doubt about what he would do. He went out, dug a hole in the ground, put the money in the hole, and buried it. Can't you just see him when the last spade full of dirt was tossed on this natural vault? "There, safe and sound" he might have been heard to say.

The master was gone for a long time, but finally he returned. When it came time to settle up with his servants, the master was pleased with the adventurous, yet profitable, investment that had been made by the first servant. Under the servant's handling, the five talents had been doubled to ten. "Well done, good and faithful servant." Then the second servant enters. He, likewise, had been busy, doubling his two talents. Again, the master was delighted.

Finally, the third servant comes before his master. "Lord, I know that you are a hard man, and I didn't dare displease you by risking what you gave me. No, my lord, I didn't dare risk a thing. I buried it, and now here is your money back. See. I didn't lose a thing!"

Neither did he gain anything. Still, the very thing the cautious servant feared, and tried to avoid, was what he received. "You wicked and lazy servant. Take this lazy, useless, pitiful excuse of a servant and throw him into the outer darkness!"

And what does this story have to tell us about kingdom life today? Well, understand that it is not about the stewardship of money. Nor does it have to do with using our talents and abilities, as such. Rather, after entrusting his own goods to his servants, the lord wants to know to what extent they have exposed themselves in the marketplace—how much risk did they take? The issue is faithfulness expressed in commitment and risk-taking.

With this story Jesus seeks to prepare the disciples for life under an absentee Lord—life in the interim. Christ entrusts His goods to His servants. When He returns from the far country He is going to want to know what we have done with these goods. Have we been bold for Him? Have we willingly exposed ourselves as His servants in the marketplace of the world? Have we been willing to take risks (at least what seem from our perspective to be risks) for Him: telling others about His love, loving the unlovable, forgiving others, denying and abandoning self that we might experience the greater joy of trust in Christ? Do we seize the opportunities put before us to make a difference in the world? Have we dared to respond to the challenge of allowing God to make of us what we were meant to be? The life of faith is filled with "risks" that, when undertaken, reap the benefits of Christ's graciousness.

Or, are we like the third servant, timid and fearful of the risks of commitment, content to bury what Christ has entrusted to us in the seeming security of complacency and caution? As Ronald Wallace has observed, the angry reply of the master to the third servant "proves that if God hates anything it is the spirit that does not believe and that will not go forth in trust, abandoning all, to His service." In the kingdom of heaven it is the cautious man who is reckoned a failure.

This parable forces us to examine how we exercise our personal and congregational faith. Will we boldly step out into the marketplace of the world with the blessings and gospel Jesus has left with us? Or, will we bury His goods because we are fearful of the risks? Are we willing to be the faithful agents of the Lord who is gone for now, but promises to return?

Personal Notes

At the Small Church Workshop in May of this year I met brother Duane Bender for the first time, though he had been preaching at the Westside congregation in Anderson, SC, for nearly three years. It was also the first time that many of the other participants at the workshop had met him. Thus, we were all quite saddened to learn recently of brother Bender's death last July.

After spending a couple of days with Duane at the workshop I was impressed with his graciousness and lack of pretension. It was obvious that he was a man who possessed a deep and simple faith and a great love for God. He was a joy to be with, bringing a fresh and gentle spirit to our gathering. I was genuinely looking forward to seeing Duane again and getting to know him better, so I am sorry that I will not have that opportunity in this life. However, the beauty and wonder of the hope we all possess as Christians is that the ending of life in the here and now does not bring an end to relationships in Christ. The Lord willing, I will still have the opportunity to get to know brother Bender better.

All of us here at *Carolina Christian* offer our love and support to Duane's wife, Betty, and to all his family.

Our hearts and prayers also go out to the family of Ernie Richards, Jr., preacher for the West Columbia church. Ernie's sixteen-year-old son, Lucas, was recently diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. Lucas began taking chemotherapy Monday, November 6. We encourage our readers to send Ernie, his wife Doreen, and Lucas a word of support and encouragement. Their address is 1722 B Ave., West Columbia, SC 29171.

Transition Notes

As you know, we are in a period of transition with the magazine. During this time we make a plea for your patience and understanding. For me, there are a lot of editing ropes to be learned. For a couple of months the paper will be a little later than usual, but we plan to be back on schedule very soon.

We hope to unveil some new feature columns in the months ahead. One of these will be a "Letter to the Editor" column. Another column will feature a North or South Carolina congregation each month with information regarding not only the history, but also the ministry of that congregation. We also want to try a column that will provide practical helps for teachers, preachers and elders.

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The Other Side of Romans 14

By Paul E. Jarrett

IN RECENT YEARS THE 14TH chapter of Romans has been cited with great frequency in religious journals circulated among churches of Christ. Invariably the focus has been on what this chapter has to say about passing judgment on those who engage in actions which we deem inappropriate. It is a favorite text of those who rail against those who seek to bind their traditional customs and interpretations of Scripture on their brethren.

The sin of holding another in contempt, or actually treating them with contempt, should not be taken lightly.

Without taking issue with that has been said about what Romans 14 says about passing judgment on others, I would like to point out that there is another side to what Paul wrote in this chapter. I am referring to his warnings about regarding with contempt those whose conscience does not permit them to engage in activities which we see as totally acceptable. I fear a lack of attention to this side of Romans 14 has caused some to sin against their brethren in viewing them (if not actually treating them) with contempt.

The sin of holding another in contempt, or actually treating them with contempt, should not be taken lightly. It is a sin which is born of pride. It occurs when we take pride in our own knowledge and look down on those we feel are ignorant by comparison. It is a sin which will lead us to violate the golden rule of treating others as we would want to be treated. It is a sin which, when engaged in, labels as a lie any claim we might make to be more mature than others. This is the case because if we are truly mature we will humble ourselves and show consideration for those who are less mature.

I would suggest we do two things when we encounter those whose conscience will not allow them to engage in that which we deem to be acceptable. First, we need to be considerate of their conscience and commend them for their desire to do God's will in all things. Second, in a spirit of meekness and patience we should seek to educate them as to the truth of God's will for men so they might come to know and appreciate the freedom which we have found in Christ.

Finally, I would like to make note of why I feel we have said more about judging than we have about holding in contempt in our handling of the text of Romans 14. I believe it is because the sin of holding in contempt is one which is committed by the "strong" brother, whereas the passing of judgment is the mark of those who are weak, according to Paul. Therefore, a lack of attention to what Paul says about the sin of holding in contempt is proof-positive of just how few strong, mature brethren there are among us.

We are reluctant to accuse others of holding us in contempt because by doing so we must indirectly acknowledge ourselves to be weak brethren. We are unable to make personal application of what Paul wrote about holding in contempt because our claims to be strong Christians are not matched by a willingness to show our strength by bearing with the weaknesses of those who are without strength (Rom. 15:1).

Paul Jarrett preaches for the Archdale church in Charlotte, NC. You may contact him at 1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210.

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Anxious About Your Pardon?

By Phil Kinzer

THERE WAS A STORY THAT ran in newspapers around the country on January 18, 1989. That was two days before Ronald Reagan left office. The story was entitled *"Hearst-Shaw Unsure Pardon Coming."* If you remember the early 1970's, the name Patty Hearst (later Shaw) rings a bell.

WE NEED TO HAVE COMPLETE CONFIDENCE THAT WE ARE NOT JUST ON PAROLE, BUT HAVE RECEIVED FULL PARDON.

She is a member of the famous Hearst publishing family. She was convicted for her part in a 1974 bank robbery and served 23 months in prison. Patty had maintained all along that she had been brainwashed by a group of revolutionaries who kidnapped her and temporarily took away her power of free choice.

At the end of any presidential term, names are brought before the Chief Executive for possible pardon.

During Mr. Reagan's final days as president several pardons were granted and signed. However, Patty's was not one of them. Her waiting and worrying ended in disappointment.

Christians have a greater expectation. There is no doubt about the availability of a pardon. God has promised the absolute purging of your record. The Son of God has been crucified as a sacrifice of atonement so that all of us may be justified by His grace. When we penitently come to God, believing in Jesus as our sacrifice, baptism becomes "not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet. 3:21). We are then past the point of pardon and can enjoy the life of a free person in Christ.

We need to have complete confidence that we are not just on parole, but have received full pardon. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Patty's *presidential* pardon didn't come, but a *divine* pardon is there for all.

Phil Kinzer preaches for the church of Christ on Providence Rd. in Charlotte, NC. Contact him at 4900 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28266.

True Friends

By Randy Gore

ONE OF THE BEST EXAMPLES of true friendship is found in the annals of the Old Testament in 1 Samuel. David and Jonathan were what we would call "best friends." They truly loved each other and had a wonderful relationship, but the bonds of their friendship were strained by the hatred of King Saul, Jonathan's father, for David. Saul was jealous of David, whom God had chosen to become king rather than one of Saul's descendants. In Saul's frustration and anger over the friendship between his son and David, he reminded Jonathan that he would not become king as long as David lived. Saul tried to fill Jonathan's heart with jealousy, but Jonathan loved his friend David more than glory. Jonathan stood up to his own father and even put his life at risk when Saul tried to kill him with a spear. All for the love of a friend. David was able to trust Jonathan completely. Before they finally parted from one another's company, they kissed each other and wept together as Jonathan said, "The Lord will be between me and you."

We all have the need for friendships like David and Jonathan's. The

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church is intended to be a people who are so bonded together in Jesus Christ that they will be there for each other in all circumstances, just as David and Jonathan were there for each other in the most stressful of situations. A true friend is obviously someone that you can have great confidence in and can trust with your feelings. Scripture says, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Prov. 17:17). To be a friend means that a person can be depended on to be there and to love you regardless of the situation—in good times and bad, whether convenient or inconvenient. A brother—and we are all brothers and sisters in the church—exists for the purpose of helping you through your hardships and afflictions. Without the security of knowing that there are people for you to turn to, life would be miserable. However, knowing that you have friends who will be there to help, offer advice, or simply just listen with a loving and non-judgmental attitude, is truly a blessing and a relief. Proverbs 27:9 tells us, "Oil and perfume make the heart glad, so a man's counsel is sweet to his friend."

The church is intended to be a people who are so bonded together in Jesus Christ that they will be there for each other in all circumstances.

One characteristic of a true friend is that he or she is one who will love you when you are unlovable. Scripture teaches us to show "forbearance to one another *(put up with each other, RG)* in love" (Eph. 4:2), and that "love bears all things (1 Cor. 13:7). That is, love endures or covers all things. The fact is that friendships can sometimes be a lot of work to develop and maintain. Friends can often be difficult to deal with and can bring a lot of stress to one's life. It is the mark of a true friend to persevere and cherish the relationship enough to endure and forbear when we are difficult. Besides, the positives of having true friends far outweigh the negatives of any anxiety, stress or burden that friends may bring to one's life. True friends remain so through it all.

Further, true friends do not remember and hold another's mistakes and sins against them. They just love each other anyway. That's what the word "covers" or "bears" means in 1 Corinthians 13:7. Just remember to have enough appreciation for the friend who bears with you to limit your "unbearableness" as much as possible.

To have friends with these qualities is a great blessing. However, as much as you need friends like this, others have a need for you to be a friend of this kind. "If you want a friend, be a friend" is sound advice. We all have the responsibility of showing others this kind of love. When you are a trustworthy friend you will develop relationships with people who you can trust. When you love others, you will be loved. When you are there for others in all situations, there will be people there for you in all situations. If you love others when they are unlovable, you will be loved when you are unlovable. We should not expect such friends if we are not this kind of friend ourselves.

Jesus said, "Greater love has one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Of course, Jesus laid down His life for us and is the greatest friend that we have. Our love for one another should be great enough that we would even die for each other. This kind of attitude towards one another will make the best possible friendships and will give us relationships that we will treasure into eternity. 📖

Randy Gore, a native South Carolinian, serves as Youth Minister for the Edgewood church in Columbus, Georgia. Contact him at 4102 Macon Road, Columbus, GA 31907.

Who Cares?

By Dennis Conner

VIRTUALLY EVERY OBSERVER of American society would agree that we have come to a point where individual status and worth are determined by what one has, not so much by what one is. Money has become our ticket to enduring significance. It is not a new problem. Greed and covetousness have always been thorns in the side of human character. And neither has the church escaped the temptations of the death grip of materialism.

The danger of materialism is that it lulls us into a false sense of worth and power and dulls our sensitivities to the needs of others. That's why the behavior of the young Jerusalem church in Acts 2:44–45 and Acts 4:32–34 is so remarkable. In both texts it is noted that they "had all things in common." They sold possessions, lands and even houses and shared the proceeds with those who were in need. We see in them that the money-gods had been cast out of the temple of their hearts and the Spirit of Christ had taken up residence there instead. Well, in most cases at least. In the same context we have the familiar and dreadful story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11). Acts 4:32–5:11 should be viewed as a single unit consisting of a contrast of two attitudes toward possessions, and what we see is that the depth of fellowship is related to what we care the most for: people or things.

In verses 32–35 we have a description of the ideal spiritual community, "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common...Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need." There was in this faith community a solidarity of love and togetherness. So deep was their bond of Spirit-created unity that it even affected the way they viewed their possessions! The attitude was "What's mine is yours!" The sharing of goods was a natural consequence of a deep inner sharing of the unity of the Spirit.

What impresses all the more is that this kind of sharing was not even commanded; it was voluntary. So powerful was their love that it simply seemed the natural thing to do! They were an alternative community declaring to the world that Christ had made possible a way of life together that was unlike anything the world had ever seen.

Their attitude raises some interesting raises some interesting, even disturbing, questions for us. Is Christian fellowship real if it does not affect the way we view the things we possess? Is fellowship genuine if things come before the needs of others in the spiritual family?

Having portrayed the solidarity of love and depth of caring that characterized the church, Luke supplies his reader with two contrasting examples.

First, there is Barnabas, the Son of Encouragement. He appears in verses 36–37 as the pre-eminent example of all that was good in the caring and sharing of the Jerusalem church. Barnabas, "having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet." His real name was Joses, but the apostles themselves changed it to Barnabas, Son of Encouragement. The change was due to what they had observed in his character. In a congregation of thousands, Barnabas had distinguished himself in his care for others.

In stark contrast we have Ananias and Sapphira. While Barnabas serves as an example of fellowship at its best, they are a perversion of it. They, too, sold some land and brought part of the profits to the apostles. However, they apparently gave the deliberate impression that they were giving all the proceeds to the church when in reality they were only giving part.

Why did they do this? Certainly, pride was a factor. They likely wanted everyone to think that they, too, were sacrificing just as much as everyone

So deep was their bond of Spirit-created community that it even affected the way they viewed their possessions.

else. Yet, there was another, deeper motive. Underlying their hypocrisy and deceit was an unholy attachment to their money, valuing it more than the needs of their brethren. They pretend to participate fully in the fellowship, but actually manifest a secret independence from it. They pretend to care while actually caring more for their money. They are materialists, and materialism ruins fellowship. It also ruins lives. When confronted separately with their deceit, Ananias and Sapphira both maintain the sham, and they lose their lives for it.

Yes, their story is quite familiar to us, and not just because we have heard it told so many times. If we will be honest with ourselves, it is familiar for another, more disturbing reason. It is familiar to us because too often it has been our own story. We are embarrassingly aware of the ways we rationalize our own covetousness. "I have all I can do to make ends meet." "My family and I have our own needs to be concerned with." "Well, they could do more to help themselves." Our rationalizations are actually evidence of our materialism.

Now, some may protest that the harsh treatment of Ananias and Sapphira does not jive with their concept of a loving and merciful God. An observation from William Willimon is helpful here. He says, "The story is harsh, severe, uncompromising in the telling; but how is falsehood ever confronted except in a manner which always seems severe to the one tangled in deceit? The cost of not confronting our deceit over possessions is high—nothing less than the very death of our life together." Why did Luke include this incident? Because he wants us to understand the high cost of putting things before people.

This text raises some important issues about our own faithfulness in caring. First, *for whom, or what, do we have the greater affection—one another or our possessions?* What does the view we take of our possessions, and the use we make of them, actually say about our unity? An authentic, Spirit-filled church is one in which there is a spiritual bond that expresses itself in a lifestyle that puts things in their place. How authentic are we? How much do we care? Enough to put people before possessions?

Second, *possessions and what they do to us is a matter of life and death.* That is the gist of the story of Ananias and Sapphira. Materialism contributes to the spiritual death of the believer. Ananias and Sapphira did not merely hold back a part of the proceeds; they held back a part of themselves. We, too, die a little more each time we withhold love and caring. Further, the fellowship dies as well. When possessions (our own or the church's) are put before people, that covetous spirit will eventually take its toll on the entire fellowship. Real fellowship will die.

Do people see in us an alternative community where people are more important than things? Or do they see in us instead what is merely a reflection of the world's values and idolatries? The mark of a true church is thatfor people than things. Are we marked?

A Man of Sorrows

By Frank Calabretta

AND THE WORD WAS MADE flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who being, in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross* (Phil. 2:5–8).

The verses above hold within them a summary of God's purpose in sending Jesus Christ to humanity. Jesus, in obedience to God the Father, laid aside all the glories and privileges of heaven and assumed a human nature. Of His own will, Jesus became a man in every respect except sin. Stepping down from the glory He had with the Father before the world came into existence, Christ then went even further and took upon Himself a lowly state, forsaking His former splendor.

The fact that Jesus was at all times God the Son did not in any way detract from His humanness. We can rightly assume that His infancy and childhood were as any other child's. Jesus laughed and cried. He played with other children and obeyed and helped His parents. He interacted with all those around Him. At some point, however, the awareness of His eternal purpose came to the forefront of His personality. This can be seen in the temple incident recorded in Luke 2:41–50.

It was Jesus' love and compassion, especially for those He knew would reject him, that made Him the prophesied 'man of sorrows.'

The Bible records that at the age of twelve Jesus, after traveling to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover with His parents, stayed behind while Mary and Joseph began the long trip home. Jesus went to the temple, where He was found by His parents three days later.

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He was listening to the scholars and teaching them a thing or two as well. In response to His mother's rebuke, Jesus said, "Why is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

We next see Jesus at the start of His ministry. At this point keep in mind that Isaiah 53:3 tells us that the Christ would be "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." I do not believe this prophetic description was meant to relate only to Jesus' final days before the cross. Rather, it would describe the heart of Jesus throughout His ministry to lost mankind.

Imagine the depths of compassion and sorrow felt by Jesus as He walked among God's chosen people, preached the words of His Father, yet was hated and cursed by so many. As Jesus spoke, taught and was tested by the scribes and Pharisees before the people, He knew that many of them would spend eternity lost. Those who had hardened their hearts. Those who had excellent knowledge of the Scriptures yet rejected the Messiah for fear of losing their prominence and position in the religious community. Those who were more interested with their earthly lives than their eternal life. As Jesus looked into their faces He knew that for them His death would be in vain.

Try to imagine the depths of your feelings if the person you loved the most was dying. Knowing that they were not saved you are faced with the knowledge that your loved one will spend eternity without God. Yet, nothing you do or say changes the hardened, misguided heart of the one you seek to help. No matter how sincerely you poor out your heart, your efforts and the Christ are rejected. Rejected is the free offer of God's grace. Imagine the pain in your heart over the lostness of your loved one.

I believe that it was Jesus' love and compassion, especially for those He knew would reject and curse Him, that made Him the prophesied "man of sorrows." Jesus loved each and every man, woman and child with a love beyond our comprehension. He was torn by the joy over those who received His words and great sorrow for those who rejected Him.

Some suggest that God has a sense of humor. Well, He just might. I believe, however, that God has set it aside for a few thousand years until He can find something to truly laugh about. 🕮

Frank Calabretta can be contacted at 17 Fisherman's Landing, Apt. #3, Ormond Beach, FL 32174.

My Kingdom

A little kingdom I possess,
Where thoughts and feelings dwell;
And very hard the task I find
Of governing it well...
I do not ask for any crown
But that which all may win;
Nor try to conquer any world
Except the one within.
—Louisa May Alcott

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The High Cost of Hearing the Truth

By Timothy Sensing

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., IN early 1967, spoke emphatically against the Vietnam War. The tide of American politics had not yet turned. King had been a friend of Kennedy, Johnson, and the liberal white man. King garnered the respect of various factions of the black population. But on the issue of the war, King stood almost alone in 1967. His advisors urged him to back away from his anti-war stand. Liberal white politicians and other black civil rights leaders distanced themselves from King. The sacred cause of civil liberties, the crusade to expose institutional racism, and the fight for equality and freedom, were all endangered by King's other moral convictions. His stand on the war, which he never changed, only hindered his cause. His politically incorrect position cost him both influence and support. A prophet in the main became a prophet on the peripheral. King was a prophet who was rejected for his commitment to the truth. In only a few short years it became fashionable to be against the war, but King lay slain in Memphis.

When Solomon became king of Judah, he exiled Abithar the priest to Anathoth. This began a counter priesthood in the north, far removed from Jerusalem's political center. When Josiah was placed upon the throne, the northern priesthood regained respect and Hilkiah, a representative of Anathoth, came to Jerusalem. Hilkiah found the lost book of the law. This began a reform of Judah's religion that was only cut short by Josiah's premature death by the hands of an Egyptian soldier.

Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah, was a priest from Anathoth. Jeremiah was called to preach a politically incorrect gospel. He advocated Josiah's reforms. He spoke against the prevailing view that Jerusalem could never be destroyed. He was castigated by the people, vilified by the religious community, and incarcerated by the political forces in Judah. Jeremiah was rejected for his commitment to the truth. In a few short years, the truth of Jeremiah's call to repentance was on the lips of chained refugees, but Jerusalem lay slain in Judah.

The gospel of John speaks on the theme of *truth* over fifty-two times. Continually, Jesus begins to speak by saying, "I tell you the truth...." This theme climaxes in John 17:17 when Jesus states, "Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth." Ultimately, Jesus claims, "I am the truth." John finally brings us to a crisis. We, too, must ask with Pilate, "What is truth?" Jesus not only spoke the truth, He was the truth. And they hung the truth on a tree—"Here is the King of the Jews"—and He died. "He came to His own full of grace and truth, but His own received Him not." He was rejected and despised. Even to this day, to listen to Jesus is unpopular. But Jesus does not lay slain on the Skull; He is risen; He is sitting on a throne.

There is a high cost to telling the truth. Why? Because no one wants to hear it. There is also a high cost in hearing the truth. Why? Because no one wants to change. Truth challenges. Truth demands. Truth pierces. Even when someone is only standing next to truth, a call for decision is issued. Will truth be recognized and accepted, or callously rejected? Truth will not be casually ignored.

Maybe, it is time to listen to the politically incorrect thing to say. Maybe, it is time to hear an unpopular message. Maybe, it is time to be open to the truth. And what does the truth demand? The same gospel that calls you into relationship with the Son also commissions you.

Hearing Demands Utterance.
Utterance Brings Rejection.
Rejection Embraces Hope.
And Jesus Gives Life. 📖

Tim Sensing is pulpit minister for the Mebane Street church in Burlington, NC. Contact him at PO Box 1861, Burlington, NC 27216-1861.

Brotherhood News

By Mike Mobley

CHARLOTTE, NC...The Archdale church of Christ hosted "An Evening of Praise" on Saturday, Nov. 18. This was a benefit concert for the Providence Christian School and featured the best in acappella gospel music from W.C.T.S., the Krusaders, Providence (from the Providence Rd. church) and Shouting Happy (from the Archdale church). WILMINGTON, NC...The Pine Valley church of Christ has added a unique feature to their AGAPE of NC Loveline. It is a 1-800 number that enables a congregation to have a much wider outreach and effectiveness. The number makes better use of volunteer resources and allows the congregation to help AGAPE provide services to more people. If you are interested in trying this as well, just contact your local phone company. ANDERSON, SC...We were saddened to learn that brother Duane Bender, preacher for the Westside church of Christ, died last July 2 at the age of 68 after a short illness. He had been diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis last March. Brother Bender preached until the Sunday before his death. Even while in the hospital, he continued to direct many activities from his bed. He was a 1970 graduate of Sunset School of Preaching. Before coming to Anderson in 1992, Duane spent twenty years in New England mission work and also preached for churches in Oklahoma and Maryland. He is survived by his wife, Betty; his son, Randle; two daughters, Rachel Ann Wilson and Beth Jane Fitzgerald; and seven grandchildren. Because of his special interest in Christian education, a memorial fund has been established in his honor. Contributions may be made to the Christian Education Fund, c/o Betty Bender, 401 Stagecoach Dr., Anderson, SC 29625. FLORENCE, AL...Nearly 3,500 people crowded the International Bible College campus for its 24th annual workshop in September, hearing more about how to "vision" the future. Keynote speakers were Paul Faulkner and G. P. Holt. The workshop focused on the premise that all Christians are leaders in some sphere and can improve their leadership skills. Dates for the 25th Annual Workshop are September 25–28, 1996. Topics, speakers and other details will be announced later. IBC is a four-year degree granting college that is known for its practical training in evangelism and campaigns. It has served the brotherhood for 24 years and during that time its faculty, staff and students have been responsible for over 10,000 baptisms.🕮

Send all News Items to Mike Mobley at 301 Reed Creek Rd., Mooresville, NC 28115.

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> **—Mark Twain**

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL. 37, NO. 12, DECEMBER 1995

"I will praise you, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works."

(Psalm 9:1)

Carolina Christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
EDITORIAL & PUBLICATION STAFF
Dennis Conner, Interim Editor
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
Jim Mullican, Associate Editor
Michael Mobley, News Editor

CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Road, Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: individual—$8/year ($15/2 years and $22/3 years); club of five or more—$7.50 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles—50¢/copy/month, or church mailing list (minimum 15) 60¢/copy/month.
Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes with Form 3579 to:
Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Address editorial matter to:
Dennis Conner
PO Box 1369
Yadkinville, NC 27055-1369

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All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 10.

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Editorial

Dennis Conner

It was a dark day for the church. The situation looked bleak, even hopeless, as Luke describes it in Acts 12. Always eager to keep the Jews pacified and quiet, Herod had discovered a way to gain popularity and support from them — make life hard for the Christians. He initiated a persecution of the church, and what better place to start than with the leaders of the movement themselves! The first to fall victim was James, the brother of John. For his faith he was beheaded. Herod then set his sights on Peter.

Peter was arrested and put in prison with four squads (16 soldiers) keeping watch over him. Ordinarily only one squad would be assigned to a prisoner, but it was the time of Passover and no trials could be held. Herod would have to wait to carry out his plans for Peter. Until then, he was taking no chances.

The church had no political clout, no friend in high places to pull some strings for them. Having already been decimated by one persecution following the murder of Stephen, what could this little band of disciples do in its powerlessness against the armed power of Rome? What could it do? It could pray, and pray it did! "And constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church" (Acts 12:5).

Here, then, were two opponents arrayed against one another, the world and the church. On the one side was Herod with the power of the sword. On the other side was the church, with the power of prayer, the only power the "powerless" possess. Now, you tell me. Which one would you bet on?

As the story unfolds in Acts 12, Peter is miraculously delivered from prison by the hand of an angel sent from God. Afterwards, he makes his way to the house where many of his brethren had come together to pray. We are told in v. 5 that they were praying for Peter, but what we are not told is the content of those prayers. Were they praying for his deliverance from prison and the hand of Herod? Or, mindful of what had happened to James, were they praying instead for God to give Peter courage as he faced certain death? Whatever it was they were praying for, they apparently were not prepared for God's answer. When Peter showed up outside the gate alive, well and free, they couldn't believe it. Surely it must be his ghost! No ghost. Just God at work. What an encouraging account this must have been to Theophilus when he read it. The church had gone head to head with the most powerful empire the world had ever known, and armed with nothing more than its prayers, the church had won! Yet, significant as it was, that victory represented only one battle in a war that still rages.

The prince of this world has not given up the fight, and will not until the true Prince returns to settle the issue once and for all time. In the meantime, the world persists in its assaults on the church. Sometimes the strategy is a full frontal assault.

Other times, the world attacks subtly and deceitfully. Sometimes we find ourselves involved in skirmishes with the world, while at other times it is full blown war with heavy casualties. How do we respond as the church? What are the weapons and strategies we employ? The answer from Acts 12 is the same for both questions — prayer. Bridging the gap between then and now, there are three relevant truths regarding the church at prayer that arise from this story.

First, *prayer is indeed the power of the powerless.* There will always be those times for the church and for the Christian individually when there are no other options left to us, and no other weapons left to us, but prayer. And what experience then teaches us is that prayer is always the best option and the most powerful weapon. This is especially true of our confrontations with the world. It is so easy to fall into the trap of thinking, "What difference can one church make in this mess of a world?" A church that prays can make a difference! A church that does not pray is certain to make no difference.

Second, *God's answers often exceed, or even confound, our expectations.* It is clear from the disciples' reaction to Peter's appearance at the door that this was not what they had expected. Again, exactly what they had prayed for in Peter's behalf we are not told, but God apparently did more than they expected. The same thing sometimes happens with us. We pray, and in His sovereign way God does much more than we ever expected Him to do. Or, we pray, but we do not pray expectantly (which the disciples might have done on this occasion), and the answer of God far surpasses our weak expectations. Or yet again, we do pray expectantly, but God answers in His own way, confounding our attempts to do His thinking for Him. Our God is often a God of surprises.

Finally, *powerful prayer is prayer prayed together.* I am absolutely convinced that as a church we have fallen far short of the biblical ideal of corporate prayer. Seldom, even in times of crisis, do congregations come together just to pray. Seldom, if ever, does the average congregation come together beyond the regularly scheduled assemblies to pray. And seldom in those assemblies do we truly join together in prayer. One of the most notable characteristics of the church in Acts is the corporate prayer life of the church, particularly in the Jerusalem church. If the church today is to stand fast in the face of worldly attacks, then Christians must come together with a heart for prayer. It's a matter of simple logic and mathematics: if the prayer of one righteous man avails much, then how much more the prayers of several righteous people joined together?

So, when we are at the mercy of the world, and seemingly powerless, we pray. In prayer we call on the God who has the power to snatch victory out of the jaws of seeming defeat. When things are at their darkest, we pray, realizing that the darkness is only the prelude to a great work of God in which He will exceed our every expectation. The world can withstand much, but the one thing it cannot withstand is prayer.

Seeing Life God's Way

Amos Allen

Our congregation has been reading through the New Testament together, having just recently come to Matthew. If the rest of the readings continue like the first few chapters of Matthew's gospel, I will be worn out.

Matthew pictures God as powerful, kind, evangelistic, unusual, concerned, forceful, and much more. God is also demanding, and this is the part that wears me out. To see what I mean, just read the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-10 and tell me if that is your prescription for happiness and purposefulness. God sees differently than I do. I struggle to see persecution or mourning as the keys to happiness.

Somehow we have lost the ability to see life God's way. Our pursuit of happiness rarely involves considering the poverty of our very souls or striving for purity of heart. Rather, we count our money to see how much fun we can have and we strain to avoid any struggles. Reading Matthew has shocked me with how far away I am from the life-style and mindset displayed by Jesus. How did I miss the message and how do I get back to being a disciple? Matthew offers an answer: look at Jesus and obey Him.

Many of us have discovered that the American dream can become a nightmare without too much effort. Being acceptable and respectable is a never-ending pursuit that strikes too many bargains with the devil. Matthew teaches us that seeing life God's way means abandoning worldly standards of success and happiness. Where did we get the idea that we could find happiness and blessing apart from God? We must be out of our minds. Instead, happiness comes from being like Jesus and following Him.

I have not been so happy lately that I could not stand it. In fact, I could have stood a bit more joy in my life. I was even searching for some, but it was proving to be elusive. Then I started reading Matthew. God is so good, and demanding. I don't mind the demands if the God of glory is there taking care of me and my dreams and emotions.

Yes, God is demanding, but His demands only enable us to find real life. Many people miss real life, but only because they are not seeing life God's way.

"Being acceptable and respectable is a never-ending pursuit that strikes too many bargains with the devil."

Amos Allen preaches for the Meadowbrook Rd. church in Asheboro, NC.

From Darkness to *Son*shine

Ron Newberry

Dark, ominous clouds rolled menacingly into Jerusalem and blanketed the city. Lightning flashed from horizon to horizon. The surging storm would soon reach a crescendo. Nothing could bridle the wild and relentless tempest which hung heavy over Israel ready to deluge the city of David and sweep away the carpenter's son.

Early Friday afternoon

The Sabbath drew near. Jerusalem had been in an uproar for days, especially the past twenty-four hours. During the Passover, Jews from all over the world had inflated the population of the city to a record number.

Something electric hung in the air which made this Passover different from all others. In the distant past, a lamb had been slain and its blood had protected the fledgling nation from the death angel in Egypt. But that was in the dim, remote past. This day another lamb would be slain. This lamb would serve as...*Pilate's scapegoat...the Lamb of God!*

His blood would drip from the rough beam of the cross and mingle with the dust. That trickle of blood would swell into a torrent that would flow from Calvary and surge over the world from that moment forward to the end of time and backward to the beginning of time, washing all who would kneel in its flood.

The storm had been brewing for months. Certain events had shaken the very foundation of all that the Jews believed about the kingdom of God. The man that some claimed to be the Messiah, a prophet, even God incarnate, and that others declared a false prophet, a disillusioned carpenter, a blasphemer, had taken on the heavyweights of Jerusalem. He had confounded the lawyers with his wisdom of Scriptures and bloodied the noses of the prominent religious leaders with his demands for integrity. Time and time again these powerful men had sought to discredit him and to trick him into answering questions which would divide his ever-growing rank of followers.

There the lawyers stood, these paragons of self-righteousness....*Humiliated by their transparency...embarrassed at losing face...disgraced in their hypocrisy!*

The Pharisees swore revenge through clenched teeth, their hands twisted into fists of fury. Spite finally spawned the inevitable. Rage rejected all reason.

Conspiring with one called Judas, one of the carpenter's own followers, the religious leaders executed their strategy. They simply dropped a few silver coins into Judas' bag and set in motion the machine of death which would undoubtedly engulf the young prophet from Galilee, the carpenter from Nazareth, the Lamb of God.

The lengthening arm of the shadow of death stretched forward to lay filthy hands on the Son of Man. Hidden from view was the mystery of God which was about to be revealed. A monstrous crime would be used by Jehovah to alter the course of history and eternity.

Pilate had agreed, against his better judgment, to free a man named Barabbas — which means "son of the father" — an insurrectionist and murderer instead of the man named Jesus — who was the "Son of the Father" — who had done only good during all of His thirty-three years. On that fateful Friday afternoon, Jesus received a merciless beating and public humiliation. The powers in Israel finally gained their victory — or so they thought.

"A monstrous crime would be used by Jehovah to alter the course of history and eternity."

Three p.m. on Friday

Inflamed spike wounds oozed blood and water with every beat of His heart. His back, raw from the beating, scraped against the rough wood of the rugged cross. His lips parched, He asked for a drink. Dried blood caked His hair and matted it to His forehead. Festering puncture wounds on His scalp fed small rivulets of liquid which trickled down His forehead, mingled with His sweat and seeped into His eyes. Angry red streaks crept their way up His arms and legs. Hands that once provided a healing touch, hands that had washed disciples feet, hands that gently held children, hands that once broke bread to feed the multitudes were now nailed cruelly to a tree. Raising Himself up for one last tormented breath, His muscles relaxed. The carpenter's feet and hands twitched in agony for the last time. He hung motionless on the cross suspended between heaven and earth.

What were the words He uttered?

"It is finished."

What was it that was finished? His life? His mission?

The life of the Son had ebbed away. The Lamb had been sacrificed. The Word hung limp beneath the sky He had created by His words. The Creator was suspended from a tree He had spoken into existence. The earth He formed from nothing shuddered.

At the request of the Jewish leaders, a Roman soldier had broken the legs of the other two men suspended on crosses on Golgotha. Believing Jesus to be dead, he did not break His legs. Instead he brutally thrust his spear into the side of the condemned man.

Blood!

Water!

No response!

The mother of the man on the tree gasped. Her shoulders heaved as she sobbed in anguish. She collapsed into the arms of their friend John.

It is finished!

There could be no mistake about His condition; He was dead! The Roman centurion had witnessed crucifixions more times than he cared to remember. He recognized the face of death when he saw it — the ashen face, the glassy stare. He wiped his blade on the trampled grass around the foot of the cross and left the scene to the mourners.

It is finished!

Surely this would mean the end of this brief disturbance to the traditions of the Jews. Life could return to normal. Like the dozens of self-proclaimed Messiahs before Him, He felt the sledgehammer blows of the religious forces and political powers of the day. One is not wise to get embroiled in a battle for the hearts and minds of people when the other side controls all the power. Between Rome and Jerusalem there was more than enough power to crush any perceived threat to either political or religious authority.

How dare a mere carpenter attempt to take control of Israel's mind from the leaders of Israel! He paid the ultimate price for such insolence. Let this be a lesson to all insurrectionists. There He hangs, suspended between heaven and earth. No one steps forward to defend Him. His ardent supporters, some of whom had vowed to follow Him to the death, have all fled into the shadows. Only a few women and friends watch Him take His last ragged, tortured breath. The place of the skull had claimed another victim.

End of Story!

If you had witnessed the events of this day, you would have at least assumed that this was the end of the story. After all, death is the end, isn't it? Death always writes the final chapter, doesn't it? Death forever has the last word, doesn't it? The sealed grave closes the final chapter of one's life, doesn't it?

To the contrary, the crucifixion was just the beginning — the beginning of life when we emerge from the world of darkness and into the spectacular *Son*shine of Jesus. His gentle rays of light will remove the guilt and the shame. We'll know the healing power of light and walk in that light forevermore.

Ron Newberry preaches for the Friendly Ave. church in Greensboro, NC. This article is from Ron's just completed book that is tentatively titled ***Out of the Shadows.*** *He is now in the process of seeking a publisher and may be contacted at 5101 W. Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410.*

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A Response to Isaac Asimov

Robert Curry

In October of 1988, Bill Moyers sat with the late Dr. Isaac Asimov in the Great Hall of Cooper Union in New York City to discuss the issue of Secular Humanism. In an article for *The Humanist* (January/February 1989), Moyers relates his conversation with the former president of the American Humanist Association. Though greatly respected in the scientific and literary fields, many of Mr. Asimov's views reveal a philosophical and scientific bias toward biblical Christianity and ultimately demonstrate the emptiness of Secular Humanism.

Asimov and Religion

Dr. Asimov claimed that he was not an enemy of religion, but was "very much against trying to Christianize the world or to Islamize it or to Judaize it or anything of the sort." He rejected the fundamentalists who wished him to be a fundamentalist as well. I wonder what Asimov's response would have been if Moyers had asked whether he wished the world to be converted to Secular Humanism? Could Asimov honestly have said that it was not his desire to see people become secular humanists?

Asimov further claimed that a reconciliation of biblical and scientific views of the universe could be achieved "if people are reasonable about this." But whose reason is to be used? We must assume that he would not desire any reason to be used other than that of Secular Humanism, for religion by his definition "lies outside" the realm of scientific study.

Asimov's distaste for religion derived partly from Christianity's use of supernatural terms. He said, "If something they didn't understand took place in science, they could dismiss it by saying, 'Well, that's what God wants,' or 'At this point a miracle took place.' " Indeed, he is correct, for the Christian does recognize that there is a power beyond the natural world as we know it, and that power is the explanation of all things. As the psalmist wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge" (Ps. 19:1). The Christian recognizes God in all that he sees. Mr. Asimov would insist on his own set of presuppositions while denying the Christian his.

Asimov also had a problem with the concept of eternity. He said, "I don't believe that I'm ever going to heaven or hell. I think that when I die there will be nothingness." This view is wholly consistent with the declaration of *Humanist Manifesto II* that "promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful." In this we see the emptiness of humanism. It offers no real hope beyond man's own progress, which is no hope at all. Imagine believing that this world and what one accomplishes within it is all that there is to existence. Humanism espouses that the purpose of each individual is merely to add something to the general mix of future development. However, does the present state of man left to himself give us any reason for optimism or hope?

Asimov went on to make a rather puzzling, if not contradictory statement, when he said, "I fear the punishment of my own conscience. I have a conscience. It doesn't depend on religion." From where did his conscience come? If religion and the eternal, personal, moral God did not inform his conscience, then what did?

Dr. Asimov also spoke of the issue of faith, disclaiming faith in lieu of human rationality. He spoke of longing for the day when everyone would become rational so that a real difference could be made in the world. But I would ask, whose rationality? Dr. Asimov and the humanists believe that rationality is essential to global continuity, but who decides what is rational? And which cultural, racial or national rationality should dominate?

The fact is, while disclaiming Christian faith, the humanists proceed to proclaim their own faith that mankind will save itself. Asimov insisted upon the unreliability of faith and the reliability of reason. He claimed that faith was without evidence, which is a common misunderstanding among humanists. Apparently he was not aware that the biblical claim is that faith is based on evidence (Heb. 11:1). David saw the evidence of God and believed (Ps. 8; 19:1-2). Peter and John saw the evidence of the gospel and had faith enough to defy the enemies of the truth (Acts 4:20). Asimov insisted that "whenever we go beyond reason into faith, there is no compelling evidence." The biblical record is full of examples of those who knew otherwise.

"...God must always have the preeminence."

Asimov, God and Evolution

Asimov also made the interesting claim that creationism is not a science. While it is true that creationism is based partially upon faith in the creative God, it is not true that it is not reasonable, especially in comparison to evolution. Evolutionary scientists have for years based their research on hypothetical assumptions and then sought to find ways of proving it. When the evidence suggested otherwise, they held on to their hypotheses and struggled on, ignoring what science had in fact revealed.

In the conversation Asimov attempted to validate science by saying it is "tentative...not certain...subject to change." However, instead of validating science, he merely showed it to be the unstable and uncertain thing that it is. While science has paraded its theories and findings before mankind over the years, only to change with additional discoveries and move in another, even opposite, direction, the Bible has steadfastly maintained throughout the years of attack and ridicule, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Asimov is clearly unreasonable in his assertions of the validity of science over all else. His claim that it is disgraceful to assert absolute truths that cannot change (creationism and Christianity) borders on arrogance, for he failed to recognize humanism's own determination to assert itself and its own claims absolutely. His criticism that Christianity accepts only evidence that agrees with it is shortsighted, for his own practice was to accept only that which tended to agree with his own assumptions. Anything else he called unreasonable and unscientific. Such is the contradiction of humanism and atheism.

Conclusion

It would be ludicrous to say that science has no place in this world, for science and Christianity can be compatible. Yet, God must always have the preeminence. Secular humanism will not allow this, making mankind, instead, the center of all things. We would all do well to remember the words of Job who, when faced with the magnificence of God, could only acknowledge his own inferiority and say, "Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know....Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:3b, 6).

Robert Curry, who formerly preached for the Duncan church of Christ in South Carolina, can be reached at 130 Beverly Lane, Lyman, SC 29365.

Putting a Face on Sin

Paul Jarrett

The woman was a sinner, an adulteress. They brought her to the Savior. However, they were not interested in seeing her saved from her sin. They were only interested in debating an issue. They were not even looking at the woman. Fortunately, Jesus saw her. He did not condemn her. Neither did He condone her sin. Instead, He forgave her and instructed her to sin no more.

There was another woman. She had been bent double by a sickness caused by an evil spirit for eighteen years. Jesus saw her and He set her free from her sickness. Unfortunately, the synagogue official did not see the woman. All he saw was an issue, for Jesus had healed on the Sabbath.

These two incidents from the life of Christ described in John 8 and Luke 12 are all too often repeated in today's church. Where Jesus sees people and views them with compassion (Matt. 9:36), far too many of us who preach have devoted our ministry to winning arguments. The point I am making has nothing to do with which side of an issue you are on. It has to do with our focus. Several years ago I became involved in a debate over an issue. I felt I was on the side of compassion. However, it took some wise counsel from my earthly father to open my eyes to the fact that I was really no different than the brother I was debating. We had both lost sight of people in attempting to have the final word on an issue.

We would all do well to recognize that the final word on every issue has already been said by God. He has given us His word to be used to minister to people who are hurting in sin. We are not called to condemn those who disagree with us. We are called to redeem people ensnared by sin. We need to proclaim His message in a redemptive manner, not in an arrogant way.

There was a third woman. She was a friend of a lady who was a member where I was preaching. I went to call on this lady at the request of her Christian friend. I went to show her the truth about salvation, but it soon became obvious that the timing was not right. The woman was not interested in what I had to say. She seemed to be content to remain lost in error. However, when I conveyed my impression to this woman's Christian friend, she said something I have never forgotten. She said, "It hurts to lose a friend."

I have never forgotten those words because they serve to remind me of how we need to approach the lost and erring. We should go to them first as a friend with a soul to be saved. Until we put a face on sin, we have no business talking to sinners.

Paul Jarrett preaches for the Archdale church of Christ in Charlotte. You may write to him at 1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210.

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Seen Love Lately?

Ray Hawk

If anyone says "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen (1 John 4:20).

Love is a great word. We sing and write about it. It is the theme of many movies. Love is responsible for flowers, mushy cards and long telephone calls. It can result in engagements, weddings and honeymoons. It makes separation unbearable. No matter how old one becomes, nurtured love never fades. It is enforced with a look, by holding hands, a gentle touch, a soft carress, a blown kiss or those three little words than can mean all the world to another — "I love you." No wonder Paul stated, "Let love be without hypocrisy" (Rom. 12:9).

When Jesus called His apostles, they came from different backgrounds. Matthew was a tax collector hated by the average Jew (Matt. 10:3). Simon "called Zelotes" (Luke 6:15) was on the other side of the coin. In our terminology Jesus had a left wing liberal in Matthew and an ultraconservative right winger in Simon. In both of them, as well as the rest, he said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). Apparently the apostles put Jesus' words into practice, for we hear nothing of a problem over Matthew's former labors. However, nearly ten years after the church began, the inclusion of the Gentiles was another matter.

When Peter returned from the house of Cornelius, Luke records the following sentiment in the church. "The apostles and the brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him and said, 'You went into the house of the uncircumcised men and ate with them' " (Acts 11:1-3). One can almost feel the resentment, arrogance and hate emanating from those folks. Not too long after that, some Jewish Christians claimed that Gentile saints were not saved until they first obeyed the law of circumcision (Acts 15:1). Feelings became so intense that Peter allowed this influence to draw him into hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11). His actions affected the conduct of Barnabas and others toward their Gentile brethren (Gal. 2:13). Ah, love. It is easy to read and talk about, but difficult at times to put into practice.

"Can we really lay claim to being New Testament Christians and despise one another?"

You can almost hear some Jewish saints crying out, "Hate a Gentile Christian for Jesus!" You might expect this kind of attitude from a nonbelieving Jew, but not from a brother in Christ.

Today we make the claim that we are restoring New Testament Christianity in the twentieth century world. Like the Jews in Isaiah chapter one, we may be good at worshipping on the right day, observing the right acts and offering the correct sacrifices, but if there is little or no love shared among those who wear His name, what profit is there in our actions (1 Cor. 13:1-3)? Are we really restoring New Testament Christianity, or are we guilty of improperly practicing Christianity as the saints in Corinth did?

Can we really lay claim to being New Testament Christians and despise one another? Some justify this alienation by claiming doctrinal perfection. There is no perfection without love. Remember where Paul put love (1 Cor. 13:13)? Let us not forget the attributes of agape love as expressed in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. What the world needs now is love, sweet love. Have you expressed it today to your spouse, children, parents, family or your brothers and sisters in Christ? Has anyone seen love lately?

This article by brother Hawk first appeared in the bulletin of the Campbell Street church in Jackson, TN.

How to Affair Proof Your Marriage

Terry Graves

"You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14). It's as simple as that. There are no conditions or escape clauses attached to it. No third-party involvement, ever. God never condones it. A person who commits this sin is not just violating an oath. He or she is violating a person.

Why do people cheat? What contributes to affairs? Certainly, adultery is often the result of emotional immaturity. Folks are taken in by the "forbidden fruit" syndrome, wanting something that they know they are not supposed to have. Desire for self-gratification then leads them to cheat. These are all marks of emotional immaturity.

Another contributing factor is the radical change in values our society has experienced over the past thirty years. It is not a coincidence that adultery has become more frequent since our society has moved away from moral absolutes and toward a view that sees morality and ethics as relative. Thus, those who have always gotten what they wanted and have never been concerned with moral boundaries may find it easy to fall into adultery. Those in positions of power or leadership are often prone to affairs. Pride sets in and they begin to think they can break the rules without consequences. These are just a couple of examples of how the shift toward relativism has affected peoples' thinking and behavior.

There is also the problem of unresolved conflict. If a couple doesn't deal with the conflict, detachment will inevitably follow. Slowly but surely they will pull away from one another. What once was love gives way to anger, loneliness and isolation because conflict was not dealt with immediately and honestly.

Unmet needs can be another factor leading to adultery. When needs go consistently unmet, the door of infidelity swings wide open. By nature we human beings are needy creatures. We need acceptance. We need affirmation. We need affection. As much as is humanly possible, marriage partners must strive to be the primary need-satisfiers in the lives of their spouses. We must express needs to one another, discuss those needs, and seek to meet them with all our hearts. Now, to affair proof our marriages we must do three things. We must affair proof ourselves, we must affair proof our spouses, and we must affair proof our life-styles.

As we think about these essentials in more detail, first, we must seek an affair-proof self. Since I am a husband I will speak from that perspective. How do I affair-proof myself? I need to stay close to God and keep my heart pure. I must stay in the Word of God and keep open the lines of communication with God; watch and pray. Adultery begins in the heart. As Jesus said, "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). When mental adultery occurs for long periods of time, it's only a matter of time before it happens in the flesh. I must have disciplined thoughts and eyes. If I stay close to God I will be able to maintain a pure heart.

A key part of staying close to God is remembering my relationship with God and with my spouse. By God's grace I have never been unfaithful to my wife, Sandra, and I plan to be faithful to her for the rest of my life. Why? First, because I love Jesus Christ. I want to please Him. Second, because I love Sandra with all my heart and I love our daughter, Ava. The thought of hurting my wife and daughter, of perhaps breaking up my family, is abhorrent to me. Third, because Sandra loves me and trusts me. Fourth, because I fear God and the consequences of disobedience. And fifth, because I fear Sandra (just kidding...I think)! All of these concerns have to do with remembering the key relationships in my life, beginning with God.

Staying close to God also means practicing the disciplines of solitude, reading and meditating on the Word, prayer and worship. Continue to press your heart against His heart. Get to know Him. His love for you and your love for Him will help to keep you from unfaithfulness.

Next, to affair proof your marriage you must affair proof your spouse. I agree with Bill Hybels who said, "The only way I know to affair proof my spouse is to keep my lawn so green that all others look brown." This means that I need to be the kind of husband who compels my wife to say, "I wouldn't dare look elsewhere. He really loves me and cares about my needs. I would be crazy to jeopardize what I have." Following Hybels' cue, I want to be so devoted to my wife that the grass all around looks brown.

Finally, you need to develop an affair-proof life-style. This includes what has already been said about staying close to God and keeping the heart pure. It also means watching out for close friendships with people of the opposite sex at work, at church, and in the neighborhood. It is possible to get too close. If you find yourself infatuated with or attracted to someone, perhaps the safest thing to do is to avoid situations in which you might find yourself alone with that person. And if you have concerns about your marriage and need to share them with someone, it is best to allow someone of the same sex to be your sounding board and to hold you accountable.

"A person who commits this sin is not just violating an oath. He or she is violating a person."

One more thing, especially for men. Watch what you allow into your mind through your eyes. Stay away from pornography and much of the stuff that can be seen on cable television. Appetites of the flesh are addictive and it does not take much of that garbage to influence you negatively. It can warp your thinking, tempt you to look for the greener grass and lead you away from God. Ultimately it can contribute to the breaking of covenant with your spouse. Fill your mind instead with the Word of God and things wholesome.

Many people who are looking for the greener grass ask, "Don't I have the right to be happy?" The answer is no. Happiness is not a right. It's a gift. It is a gift and it is always wrong to pursue happiness at the expense of others. If your happiness means hurting God, your spouse and your children, then your concept of happiness is seriously flawed.

I urge you to do everything within your power to keep a wall of protection around you and your spouse. If you have already fallen into adultery you need to remember that God's grace is bigger than your sin. Jesus is willing to forgive and Jesus is able to strengthen.

Terry Graves preaches for the church in Shelby, NC. He and his wife, Sandra, have a young daughter, Ava. Terry can be contacted at 845 W. Warren St., Shelby, NC 28150.

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Book Review

Doug Vogel

Carley Dodd, David Lewis and Darryl Tippens. *The Gospel According to Generation X* (Abilene, TX; ACU Press, 1995).

Abilene Christian University professors Lewis, Dodd and Tippens have co-authored three works on adolescence in the church: *Shattering the Silence — Telling the Church the Truth About Kids and Sexuality; Dying to Tell — The Hidden Meaning of Adolescent Substance Abuse;* and their most recent book, *The Gospel According to Generation X — The Culture of Adolescent Belief.* The authors have done extensive research over the years and analyzed the responses of 4,000 adolescents (along with responses from parents, ministers, and elders) from the churches of Christ.

The book begins by stating, "Almost half [45%] of all teenagers raised in churches of Christ end their affiliation sometime after high school graduation." How many of these will return to the church later in life is unknown and will not be known until a long-term study is completed. This book is an attempt to empower parents and churches with the knowledge needed to keep more of our young people committed to the Lord and involved in the church.

A long list of teenagers' doctrinal beliefs is provided. Results show that teens do take seriously the core message of the Bible (for instance, 97% believe that Jesus was raised from the dead), yet many do not hold the identifying marks of the church of Christ as being essential (19% believe that using instruments during worship is sinful).

Teens have a positive view of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They view God the Father as a compassionate friend, the Son as a friend and guide, and the Holy Spirit as the great encourager. However, perhaps due to the politically correct and tolerant secular society that surrounds them, teens do not picture God as judge. Instead, they believe that God seldom, if ever, judges anyone. This incomplete perception of God is one that churches need to give attention to. The book is also full of charts, graphs and lists relating to the positive and negative effects of various social factors. For example, there are the negative effects of listening to toxic music (heavy metal, metal trash, etc.), substance abuse and sexual immorality as they relate to the importance teens attach to God and spiritual matters.

The importance of youth ministry is stressed. However, "although specific ministries centered on youth are important, positive family traits — such as parenting skills, open communication and parents' commitment to Christ — are most critical to the spiritual formation of teens." The book notes that when parents blame the youth minister, the elders or the church for their teens' spiritual problems, there is often a problem at home.

Many other helpful areas are stressed, such as the importance of spiritual mentors to imitate those who imitate Christ, the need to make baptism a major and joyous occasion, the importance of biblical literacy, and the importance of genuine community in the church instead of superficial social events.

This book is a must for parents, youth ministers, elders, preachers and anyone interested in the spiritual formation of our youth.

The reviewer, Doug Vogel, is a youth minister in Ballinger, TX. He became a Christian in 1988 through the influence of the Whiteville and Shallotte, NC, congregations.

Brotherhood News

Mike Mobley

WILKESBORO, NC...Many Christians in the Carolinas know Shawn Harmon and remember him as a camper and worker at Carolina Bible Camp every summer. Shawn is now in Papua, New Guinea, serving as a para-missionary. The workdays are long, he has had personal belongings stolen, lives in a hut and is a young man who is a long way from home and family. Shawn's support is overseen by the Wilkesboro church in Wilkesboro, NC. If you would like to write Shawn and encourage him, his address is Box 427, Goraka, EPH, Papua, New Guinea. He will surely appreciate a supportive word from his brothers and sisters here... MOCKSVILLE, NC...Dr. Charles and Lesa Branch of the South Fork congregation in Winston-Salem have pledged a gift of $25,000 to Carolina Bible Camp and Retreat Center in order to establish an endowment fund if CBCRC can match that with an additional $25,000 by December 31, 1995. If you would like to support CBCRC in this effort you may send your contribution to the camp in care of Jack Harris, 1419 Hedgelawn Way, Raleigh, NC 27615. CHARLOTTE, NC...The Archdale church of Christ has begun a monthly publication that is mailed to nonmembers of the community. Paul Jarrett, the preacher for Archdale, says, "Its twofold purpose is to provide information regarding the activities of the Archdale church of Christ and provide instruction of a positive nature." The publication contains a personal invitation to come and worship and investigate what the congregation believes. It also contains activity announcements, lessons drawn from personal experiences, articles on daily living and articles about community issues and events. For more details you may contact the church office at PO Box 2421002, Charlotte, NC 28224. This type of outreach may have real possibilities.

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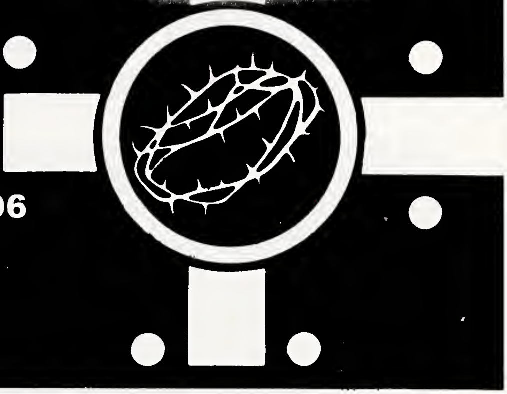
CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL. 38, NO. 1 January 1996



RESOLVING MARITAL CONFLICT

Carolina Christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
EDITORIAL & PUBLICATION STAFF
Dennis Conner, Interim Editor
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
Jim Mullican, Associate Editor
Michael Mobley, News Editor

CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Road, Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: individual—$8/year ($15/2 years and $22/3 years); club of five or more—$7.50 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles—50¢/copy/month, or church mailing list (minimum 15) 60¢/copy/month.

Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes with Form 3579 to:
Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739
Address editorial matter to:
Dennis Conner
PO Box 1369
Yadkinville, NC 27055-1369
Address news items to:
Michael Mobley
301 Reed Creek Road
Mooresville, NC 28115
Address commercial advertising inquiries to:
Jacobs List, Inc.
PO Box 120
Clinton, SC 29325
Address all advertisng pertaining to the churches of Christ or its members (including related organizations) to the editor.

All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 10. Order from Carolina Christian Bookstore, PO Box 1219, Yadkinville, NC 27055 (1-800-343-1081, Monday—Friday, 9:00—6:00).

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Editorial

Dennis Conner

WITH THIS ISSUE *CAROLINA CHRISTIAN* begins its 38th year of publication. That's a long time, especially for a regional paper, but God has been good. As with any endeavor in life, there have been good times and bad, successes and failures. Throughout its history the magazine and its editors have had their loyal supporters and vocal critics, but that experience certainly is not unique to *Carolina Christian*. All of those who have a part in the production of the magazine are grateful to God for His rebukes as well as His blessings and give Him the glory for His sustaining power.

I don't know how far the vision of the founders of *Carolina Christian* (originally the *Carolina Messenger of Truth*) extended, but after thirty seven years of publication their dream is still going strong. We are proud of our history, but we are not content to dwell on it. We enter this new year with optimism, purpose and prayer. We know that 1996 promises to be a year of challenge for us, but buoyed by the strength of God and encouraged by the support of our readers we are confident that those challenges will be met.

We believe some exciting and helpful things lie ahead for our readership. For instance, the theme of the March issue will be "A Holy Church: Studies in Titus," with Mike Mobley serving as the guest editor (Mike put together the excellent April, 1995 issue, "A Model Church: Studies in First Thessalonians"). Other upcoming themes will be "You Can Trust Your Bible," "The Body of Christ," "Major Concerns From Minor Prophets," "Educating Our Kids," "Communion: What Meaneth This?" and "Luke, the Compassionate Gospel."

Thanks to you all for staying with us in the past, and thanks in advance for staying with us in the future. In 1996 may you know His grace and peace.

This Month

A few years ago, I performed the wedding ceremony for a young couple. Prior to the ceremony I had spent several hours with these young folks in pre-marital counseling. There were some differences between them that caused me some concern, but we addressed them and other matters. The young man and young woman seemed head-over-heels in love with one another, so I was hopeful for them.

About ten months later they called me. They needed to talk. They were having problems. When they arrived at the appointed time the young wife stormed into my office and without so much as a "hello" threw herself down into a chair and said, "You never told me it would be like this!" After giving her time to air her disgruntlements, I reminded her that I had indeed counseled them about every single area she had just talked about, including how to deal with conflicts in marriage.

I would like to be able to tell you that they went home, worked everything out, and are now a happily married couple, but they aren't. They didn't make it.

Marital conflict is inevitable, no matter how much two people love one another. The key to survival is how couples respond to that conflict. With this thought in mind, this issue of *Carolina Christian* is devoted to resolving marital conflicts. The guest editor is Paul Jarrett, preacher for the Archdale church of Christ in Charlotte, NC. Paul is no stranger to our readers and has devoted a great deal of time and study in his ministry to the subject of marriage. We hope that these articles will help to fulfill a need in marriages that may even now be in conflict. Perhaps one or more of these articles will strike a responsive chord in your own heart and marriage. If so, let God be thanked. 📖

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Guest Editorial

Paul Jarrett

NO MATTER HOW MUCH LOVE warms our hearts, the realities of life together as husband and wife can often leave us feeling chilled. Just as the touch of our spouse's cold feet under the blankets can result in a reflex to move away from them, our initial reaction to marital realities can often be flight. However, if love for one's mate can overcome initial discomfort, these normal relationship problems ca be handled. By drawing closer rather than pulling away we can warm our spouse's cold hands and feet, for as Solomon wrote, "if two lie down together they keep warm" (Eccles. 4:11f).

This issue of *Carolina Christian* contains articles dealing with what I identify in my pre-marital counseling as the principal problem areas in marriage. Solomon made reference to "six things which the Lord hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him" (Prov. 6:16). In pre-marital counseling I tell couples there are six potential problem areas (i.e. sex, finances, role concepts, goals and interests, family issues, and values) and a seventh overriding issue (i.e. communication) which can destroy a marriage. Each of these problem areas are addressed in this issue.

One unique feature of this *Carolina Christian* is that the articles are written by counselors, not preachers (with the exception of C. David Shuping, who is both). I am indebted to Tom Slaughter and to the counseling staff of AGAPE of NC for their work in writing these articles. I want to not only commend them for the articles they have written, but also to commend them for the good work they do on behalf of children and families throughout North Carolina.

One of the evidences that has always been cited as proof of Christ's divinity and the Bible's influence has been the impact Jesus and His message have had on our world. The many good works done by Christians acting individually, and in company with one another, brings glory to God just as Jesus said it would. AGAPE of NC is a wonderful example of how Christianity influences our world for good.

I have great appreciation for the vision and dedication of men and women such as Tom Slaughter and those who have been inspired by his example to use their knowledge and training to minister to those in need. The work AGAPE of NC does in providing counseling services to unwed mothers; foster care and adoption services; and family counseling benefits those who need our help the most. The majority of people merely curse the darkness, but those who work with and support AGAPE are lighting candles. It is my prayer that this issue of *Carolina Christian* will be one of those candles.

Paul Jarrett preaches for the Archdale church in Charlotte, NC. He is a member of the editorial staff of Carolina Christian *and a frequent contributor to the magazine. Contact him at 1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210.*

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Values in Marriage

Richard D. McAnulty

PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OTHER time in the history of the church, married couples find themselves struggling with differences in their personal values. Whereas different beliefs about major points of doctrine and conduct may be apparent early in a relationship, different views on more subtle or secondary issues may not surface until much later. Different beliefs about personal values may initially appear insignificant. However, the failure to resolve these differences may result in a tremendous burden in the relationship.

In contemporary society we're witnessing ever-changing standards for acceptable behavior. The continually evolving social norms and wide differences across geographical regions can be surprising and frustrating to all of us. Because of the changing nature of what is considered acceptable, we may find ourselves reconsidering personal beliefs and values. The freedoms allowed and encouraged in our culture put us in a position of making decisions about our personal values in a way that was not possible in previous generations. Our culture has determined that there is a broad range of acceptable beliefs and practices, and inevitably many Christians find themselves evaluating and even reconsidering their own values.

> **It is important for couples to openly discuss their personal values early in the relationship.**

While we sometimes struggle with our personal values as individuals, when the issue comes up in a marriage the challenge may be increased tremendously. Not only is one person evaluating his own personal values, but he may also have to take into account those of his partner. Consequently, we find that problems with differences in values are not uncommon.

We find that problems over values are especially common over issues that are viewed as secondary: appearance and attire, entertainment, use of time, personal habits, choice of friends and related issues. Christian couples are often more likely to have disagreements over acceptable choices in entertainment and personal habits than over doctrinal issues such as baptism. Within the church there is general agreement on the significance and necessity of baptism. There is less agreement and less teaching on these secondary issues (such as entertainment and clothing choice). For some couples, the consequence of this freedom is conflict over differing values.

Conflicts over personal values may not develop until the relationship has lasted for some time. Recently married couples sometimes express surprise in discovering differences in values that were previously unnoticed. Thus, it is important for couples to openly discuss their personal values early in the relationship. Pre-marital counseling can be of tremendous benefit in identifying potential problems areas. The earlier these differences are identified, the more likely there will be a successful resolution.

As with any other difficulty in marriage (or any relationship, for that matter), problems are best addressed with open communication and an unselfish, loving attitude. When a problem with differences in values is identified, each partner should individually conduct a cost-benefit analysis: (1) what is this particular preference or habit costing me and the relationship, and (2) what is the benefit of this particular value to me and to the relationship? When considered this way we find, like the apostle Paul, that personal preferences and habits are not worth causing stumbling blocks for those whom we have committed to love as ourselves.

If differences in values are causing problems that seem insurmountable, it is best to seek consultation. Consider finding someone whose faith you respect, whether it be your preacher, an elder, a parent or a Christian counselor. With steadfast love, prayer and dedication problems with differences in values can be resolved. Rest assured that virtually all happily married couples have had to resolve similar problems. Successfully working through these differences in values can prepare you to master the inevitable future challenges that occur in all relationships. As the cliché goes, "practice makes perfect," and this applies to problem-solving as well.

Dr. Richard McAnulty teaches in the Psychology Department at UNC-Charlotte. He may be contacted through the Providence Rd. church of Christ, 4900 Providence Rd, Charlotte, NC 29226.

Communication

Tom Slaughter

IN THE SUMMER OF 1962 I PREACHED my first sermon. I stood for 45 minutes in the pulpit delivering that chart sermon. It seems that from that moment on people have been approaching me about the problems in their lives.

> *The art of communication is primarily that of listening, not transmitting.*

Among the most common statements are: "My wife just doesn't understand me," and "He never listens when I talk." These two common complaints of marriage serve to demonstrate why most of us as marriage and family therapists have identified communication as the number one problem, and therefore, the number one solution to most problems in relationships.

Those who know me even casually know of my love of flying. It has been with me all of my life. After listening to me for over two decades, my wife came to me quite unexpectedly one day with a message, "Put up or shut up." Now, she didn't even come close to actually using those words. Instead, she gave me a card and some money for my first flying lessons. She then tactfully responded to all my reasons why I might not follow through. But after all was said and done, the message was clear. "Either do it or hush!"

That story leads me to my first major area of communication needs in marriage. Listening to the words is important. However, it is at least equally important to pay attention to how the words are being said. In working with couples I encourage them to paraphrase what I call the "impact statement" of what the other has said. This exercise must follow other exercises that involve repeating exactly what the other has said and discussing what feelings have been read from the communication. Once it is established that a person has actually heard the words and the emotions attached, it is vital to ask and understand the following question, "What was I really supposed to have learned from this conversation?" In other words, what was the impact statement? It is an exercise that reduces the whole article to a descriptive headline. I encourage couples to take time to reflect these impact statements to each other, just to ensure that they really did get the proper message.

A couple of years ago Ron Newberry and I were flying back to Greensboro from Lexington, Kentucky. Even though it was a dark night with little moonlight, we were keenly aware that two miles below us were some very formidable mountains. It was about that time that I realized that we were hearing nothing from Air Traffic Control or any other pilot. We went through the "radio out" emergency check list trying to find and fix the problem, all to no avail. NO COMMUNICATIONS was our conclusion. About fifteen minutes and fifty miles later, a lone voice was heard. A controller said, "N4489S, you should now be receiving." We were. He went on to say, "I don't know exactly what your problem was, but we heard every word your co-pilot was saying and we knew that you could not hear us." We later learned that the fault was in an intercom system that had stuck Ron's microphone open. This incident so accurately describes a common communication difficulty in marriage. With a microphone button stuck open, it is impossible to hear anything from anyone else. No real communication takes place.

The communication barrier here is lack of listening. In our example a mechanical failure made listening impossible, but our psychological barriers can be just as damaging. The art of communication is primarily that of listening, not transmitting. If one side is doing most of the talking I very often learn that the other side stopped listening a long time ago. The solution to this major barrier to good communication can be as simple as taking turns listening and speaking. I have often been tempted to use two-way radios with couples who desperately need to learn this skill!

A few day ago I was flying to Parkersburg, West Virginia, in a solid overcast when the controller's voice quickly faded away into nothingness. I was "blind" in the clouds, unable to hear the controller, and unsure if anyone could hear me. Soon another pilot transmitted, "Atlanta Center, N3851L says he can't hear you." While lost communication emergency procedures are precise and reliable, there was still tremendous comfort in hearing another voice. He relayed my message and soon I switched to another frequency that worked. I use this to introduce the most common of communication problems—one side just quits talking. Unlike the world of aviation, few of our families have standardized emergency procedures for handling such situations. Most of our families simply crash and burn.

In this brief article there has been no mention about the subject(s) of communication. That is because it really does not matter that much *what* you are talking about. It can be anything. Rather, I have tried to emphasize that if it is important enough to one person to talk about it, it *must* be important to the other to listen. When communication breaks down, whose fault is it? Sometimes it is the transmitter, sometimes it is the receiver, and sometimes it is external interference unrelated to either one.

I believe that there are times when good communication breaks down in the best of families and relationships. In the real world, just like in aviation, there are things beyond our control. The important quality for strong families and marriages, then, is to have in place a procedure for re-establishing communication. Like the emergency procedures for flying, relationship procedures must include commitment to "continue the flight according to the filed flight plan." That way, you will not lose track of each other when the attempt to re-establish communication occurs. And one more thing. Don't be afraid to ask for help from another pilot along the way.

Tom Slaughter is the Executive Director of Agape of NC, a licensed child placement and family services agency with regional offices throughout North Carolina. He worships with the Friendly Ave. church in Greensboro, NC, where he also serves as a deacon. He may be contacted at 302 College Rd., Greensboro, NC 27410.

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That's Not the Way We Used to Do It!

Dennis Mays

IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED heaven and earth and man and woman. He planned from this time that the two should become one. They were to cleave unto one another, leave their parents and form their own family. Sounds simple, right? Well, only to someone who has never been married. Even in the best Christian homes there are times when you hear, "Well, that's not the way we used to do things back home. Mom always...or Dad used to do it like this...." The tenor of this dialogue is emotion-packed and the emotion coming through is not always loving. In fact, it may have a hostile ring to it.

> Change is not something the other person must do. Change is something that one must do for oneself.

Culture Shock

In today's society the only constant is change. Seldom do people stay put long enough to begin and end in the same community. Marriages occur with individuals from varying backgrounds, experiences and totally different cultures. When my future wife and I met at Abilene Christian University, little did we know how differently we had been raised. We were both from strong Christian families. However, I was raised in a small West Texas community while my wife was raised in a small community in East Texas. She was part of a large extended family comprised of grandparents, lots of aunts and uncles, and tons of first and second cousins from both sides of the family. They loved to be together and at the drop of a hat they gathered to celebrate birthdays, holiday or any other events they thought needed celebrating. They dearly loved one another's company. My family, on the other hand, consisted of my immediate family. All of my grandparents died when I was young and my brother and sister were much older. My idea of close family meant my parents, my brother and sister and their families. The rest of the Mays family was scattered across Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. Our extended family gatherings occurred only at the annual family reunion held during the summer.

Different Expectations

My wife and I married while students at ACU and we stayed in Abilene for the next fifteen years. Abilene was neutral territory. We were closer to my family geographically but far enough away that one would think that we would not experience the problems couples have who live near their families. Not so! We didn't always cleave to each other. Learned patterns of behavior, emotional expectations and our own routines formed in our youth did not always match. There were times when we did not see eye to eye. My expectations about how things should be handled, purchased, reacted to or responded to did not coincide with my wife's. Simple things like who goes shopping for what, when where and how could raise problems. Even silly things could spell a misunderstanding between us. For instance, being from West Texas I liked to stand at the window and watch it rain. Rain was a blessing in West Texas. Because my father was a part-time farmer, I had learned that when clouds gathered, skies darkened and thunder rumbled, it was time to go to the nearest window or door and watch the coming rainstorm. My wife, however, com-

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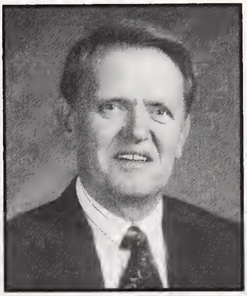

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ing from East Texas and living in town had seen plenty of rain. She thought I was trying to get out of doing my chores when I stood at the window to watch it rain. I did not understand why anyone would not want to stop and see this event. Through communication she learned that I was not loafing, and I learned that I couldn't stand at the window and watch it rain all the time (especially since moving to North Carolina). It took lots of talking, listening, understanding and compromising before any change in our behavior was initiated.

Family Tradtions

Family traditions were also different and affected each of us, especially when we visited our families on their turf at Christmas time. When we went to see my wife's family I thought that I would be spending the time with her sisters, their families and her parents. This was what my family had always done. Boy, was I in for a shock! Upon arriving at my in-laws I was immediately whisked off to a large Christmas gathering. This friendly mob of people brought all their gifts to one tree and then had a mass opening. Noise, food, fun and torn gift wrap filled every room. In my family our small group gathered on Christmas Eve to open our gifts to one another. My sister's and brother's families then retired to their homes. Within half an hour of opening our gifts Dad had all the Christmas wrap cleaned up and sometimes he took down the tree. Back in East Texas, I am sure that it took Aunt Ruth, our official Christmas gathering hostess, several days to remove all the debris. Now I love my East Texas family and I cherish and claim the Roddy, Ross and Cole Christmas Extravaganza as my own. And Becky has grown to enjoy the peace and quiet of the Mays' Christmas. At first we did not know if we could accept the change. We had to talk about how neither of those Christmas experiences measured up to our expectations. We did not keep our negative feelings bottled up, however. We learned to discuss our feelings in neutral settings and in ways that did not attack either family tradition.

I realize that these examples of differences are minor, but what would be the outcome if we had been from cultures that were 360 degrees apart? I believe the ability to make one family out of two and to weather the trials of family and in-laws is based on these four principles: commitment, communication, compromise and change.

Commitment

A deep loving commitment to one another is essential if a family is going to be successful. If there is strong commitment to the marriage and the new family, there is a greater likelihood that the partners will do whatever is needed to see that negative influences originating from in-laws, parents, work, or anyplace else will have the least impact possible.

Communication

Further, when a couple is committed to the marriage the next two principles, communication and compromise, seem to occur more easily, even though they may be difficult in themselves. Communication is essential if one is to stop the negative impact of misunderstanding or of unmet expectations. Couples must learn to communicate with one another in non-accusatory ways. When they learn to avoid placing blame on others they can far more easily work through many of their problems, including those upsetting situations that provoke feelings of explosive anger. Communication is what allows these problems the opportunity to be resolved. If problems such as these are kept inside and are allowed to stew and fester, they obviously can inhibit the growth of the relationship. Whatever the source of the problems, open, honest and direct communication must occur in an atmosphere of trust if there is to be positive growth and bonding in the marriage and family. This kind of communication must be practiced not only with spouses, but with other family members as well since they may at times be a part of the problem.

Compromise

The outgrowth of commitment and communication is compromise. Love and commitment enable communication, and as communication grows a couple begins to understand things about themselves. With this understanding comes the ability to compromise. Compromise becomes a means to fortify the marriage and other existing family relationships. It can be difficult for some because they perceive it as losing. However, couples need to understand that in compromise, everyone wins. In compromise both parties become peacemakers. Harmony and good will result in a marriage where compromise occurs. Due to the strong commitment to one's marriage and family, the ability to compromise assists a couple in achieving their most desired goal—a happy, loving and united Christian home.

Change

Finally, there is change, the fourth key element necessary to ensure that families overcome the potential conflict areas of marriage and family. Change is not something that the other person must do. Rather, it is something that one must do for oneself. If you experience difficulties, only you, with God's help, can make the changes that will help to solve the problem. This requires that you be open and flexible in your views and opinions and that you learn to accept differences in people. Change requires the ability to be honest with oneself, patience (which does not come easily) and the willingness to place the happiness of another before one's own happiness. Remember that the only change you can control and effect is your own.

Conclusion

Everyone experiences problems in marriage. Again, happiness and success in marriage boils down to the four C's: commitment, communication, compromise and change. And the first (greatest) of these is commitment (love)!

Role Concepts

Rae Anne Seay

"I DON'T WANT TO WEAR SOMEthing beautiful, I want to wear something cool!" I had to smile at the words of our five year old. "Beautiful" to Sarah means anything feminine, while "cool" refers to the type of clothes that her four year old brother, Michael wears. I have to admit to putting a bow in her hair nearly every day of her life, and on this particular day I was insisting that she wear an outfit which has three gold angels and an abundance of lace and ribbon (it most certainly qualified as "beautiful"). This was not the first time Sarah (or Michael, for that matter) had demonstrated a temporary rejection of "gender appropriate" clothing and interests. However, these episodes have caused us very little anxiety, partly because we understand that a child does not view gender as a permanent reality until the age of six or seven.

In fact (with the exception of their clothing and the way their rooms are decorated), we have been careful to de-emphasize the importance of gender in our home. That is, we encourage Sarah to develop and to have pride in all the wonderful traits that we think of as "feminine," and we also encourage her to be assertive, independent and ambitious (stereotypically masculine traits). With Michael, not only do we reinforce his "masculine" traits, but we also encourage him to be compassionate, affectionate and cooperative (stereotypically feminine traits). The flexibility to be emotional in one situation, logical in another, assertive in another, and so on, will hopefully provide both Sarah and Michael with the opportunity to transcend the restrictions imposed by "gender-appropriate" behaviors and to develop their potential to its fullest.

Shifting Gender Roles

Whether you agree with our parenting philosophy or not, it is one which many people, including Christians, are using (perhaps unconsciously) as they raise their children. This phenomenon is working reflexively with the erosion of traditionally imposed gender roles. In other words, as society moves further away from the Ward and June Cleaver models, more children are raised to have the best of both traditionally masculine and feminine traits; likewise, as fewer men and women fit the traditional stereotypes, cultural expectations for gender roles are increasingly challenged and blurred. This has an impact on the way children are being raised, on the way men and women interact with one another in the workplace and also on the way we interact with one another in the context of marriage.

This cultural shift presents us with both positive and negative implication for marriages. It can be a little uncomfortable living without clear models of what life, particularly family life, should look like and where we (based on gender) fit in. Viewed in a more positive light, people who choose marriage as a lifestyle today are, in many ways, free to custom-design their roles. Couples are now able to work together in a way which allows for the development and expression of individual strengths even when those skills or interests might be considered nontraditional. This is certainly not to say that traditional roles are undesirable, but rather that if a particular couple finds that they are not completely suited for traditional roles, other options are available to them.

> **The most successful marriages are those in which the husband and wife are able to couch their role expectations in flexibility, allowing for personal growth and changing circumstances.**

The most obvious departure from traditional roles in marriage is that of women pursuing a full or part-time career instead of committing to full time domestic life. Society has increasingly sent women the message that they have a right to a fulfilling professional life outside the home. This, coupled with economic realities which present a need for two incomes in many families, has led to a dramatic increase in the number of women participating in the work force. Nearly half (45.4%) of all civilian workers are women. Corporate America is responding to this shift by becoming more "family friendly." Flexible work hours, tele-commuting, and other accommodations are being put into place.

Implications for Marriage

What implications does this hold for marriages? For dual career families, practical questions arise such as: who makes the child care arrangements, who stays home when a child is ill, whose career is given top priority when a transfer is pending, and simply, who is going to cook dinner tonight? Further, it is well documented that wives who work outside the home participate more in family decision making than wives who do not. It is also true that the husbands of these women are often involved in managing the household, caring for their children, and performing housework. If treated as a team effort this can be very positive for both the husband and the wife.

In addition to economic and domestic responsibilities, there are other areas which have the potential to be custom-designed. Traditionally, mothers have played a more nurturing role in child-rearing than fathers. Today most men are not only in the delivery room, they are also more emotionally connected to and actively involved with their children (a blessing to the mothers, the fathers and the children). One of my male students is the vice-president of his daughter's elementary school PTA. He contributes to her education in ways that we would traditionally associate with a "room mother." Molly, a classmate of Sarah and Michael, has parents who are both physicians. Presently, her father is the one putting his career on hold to care for her. There are also the role decisions to make regarding social obligations ("Who writes the thank you notes?") and extended family relationships ("Who cares for an elderly parent?").

Christian Marriages

Naturally, Christian husbands and wives must design their marital roles within the parameters of scripture. Scripture must always be the determining factor in one's approach to marriage. However, I would suggest that those parameters are not necessarily as restrictive as we have always been taught. I have counseled with couples who have hurt each other deeply over misunderstanding or misuse of scripture (such as ideas regarding submission in Ephesians 5). It is important to remember that more fundamental than how Christian couples relate to one another as spouses is the way Christian spouses are commanded to relate to one another as fellow Christians.

Building a marriage today will require both forethought and continuing consideration of economic, domestic, parental, social and other roles. Failure to discuss and come to terms with role expectations prior to marriage can lead to future frustration, resentment, and overall poorer family functioning. Likewise, a couple must maintain honest and thoughtful communication in regards to roles throughout the marriage. The most successful marriages are those in which the husband and wife are able to couch their role expectations in flexibility, allowing for personal growth and changing circumstances. The ultimate goal is to design a marriage which meets the reasonable needs of the family unit and of the individuals simultaneously. Neither set of needs should be consistently sacrificed.

Conclusion

Sarah and Michael may choose traditional roles in their marriages. That's fine. For the most part, so did we. If they do, my husband and I will be comfortable knowing they did so freely and not because they were led to believe that a "Leave it to Beaver"-life is somehow universally better than other available options, and not because they were ill-equipped to embrace the opportunity to custom-design their marriages. Our prayer is that our children will have marriages that glorify God, and that they will deliberately use all of their spiritual gifts to bless their families and their communities.📖

Rae Anne Seay attends the Roosevelt Drive church in Jacksonville, NC. She holds a B.A.from Harding University and a M.SW from the University of Tennessee. Contact her at 194 Raintree Circle, Jacksonville, NC 28540.

What's Money Got to Do With It?

Anita W. Rives

I HAVE BEEN MARRIED FOR TEN years. Without question the toughest of those years was the first one. No matter how well you think you know someone before the ceremony, living with them takes some adjusting to. My husband and I were older (well, we were 28) and presumably more mature when we got married. Much to our surprise, maturity does not ensure a smooth transition into wedded bliss. All that our years of "maturity" amounted to was that we both had deeply established ideas about how we did things, particularly about how we handled our finances. Sharing toothpaste and sharing money are not parallels.

We quickly realized that we had a lot of questions and issues to address. One checking account or two? If one, how many checkbooks? If two, who pays for what? How much do we save as opposed to how much we spend? Who pays the bills and keeps the records? Most importantly, does it really matter if all those ATM withdrawals are written down now or later? We quickly discovered that the answer depended on who you asked.

At this point I need to preface the remainder of this discussion with a few facts. First, I married a man who even as a college student had a copy of every bill that he had ever paid and a bill of sale for every item he had ever purchased. He actually owned a file cabinet! I, on the other hand, was on a first name basis with the people who handle overdrafts at the bank. You can see the problem. He was entirely too rigid. I prayed that he would overlook the bank statement that arrived with irritating regularity the second week of every month. I dreaded the words, "We really need to sit down and balance the checkbook." What that really meant was, "Let's see how badly you've goofed up this month." We never balanced the checkbook without yelling and tears. I won't elaborate on who did which. The only thing worse than balancing the checkbook was the month of January when "we" felt compelled to make a (shudder) budget for the coming year. This was when things really got interesting. "Yes, I want to retire one of these days, but I also would like to eat as well." "What do you mean set up a college account? We don't have any children!" He really expected that our income and our expenses would balance out!

Over time I began to notice a shift in these exchanges. After a couple of years I noticed that we cried and yelled less at check-balancing time. I still dreaded it, but there were actually some months that were calm, if not pleasant. Budget time began to be a time for planning and dreaming instead of protecting and challenging. I quit work to go to graduate school, and to my amazement and relief we had enough money saved to pay for it.

I was just beginning to see my husband's obsessive-compulsive behavior in a new light and with a modicum of respect, and then we got pregnant. We made the plunge back to square one at the speed of light. We now had a whole new set of questions to deal with. Was I going to work or stay home? Could we manage without two incomes? Should I take on more responsibility for paying the bills and keeping the records since I was home more? Could I make decisions about purchasing without consulting my husband? How much of a vote would I have about spending if I didn't earn any income? I had always been vaguely aware of the fact that money–who had it and how much–bestowed one with a certain kind of power. Would the money in the household still be "ours" if I wasn't bringing any home? You can see the problem. It was very clear that he was obsessed with power!

Once again time intervened and changed things. Our lives got busier and busier. We had another child. I went back to work part-time. His job became more demanding with more and longer hours. We had more commitments at church. Then there were the swimming lessons and the soccer matches. We fought less about money. Balancing the checkbook was just one of those jobs that had to get done. Our budget began to be a picture of how we would, literally, spend the next year. All of those line items became an activity that required an investment of our time as well as our money. It became a tangible way of expressing our priorities and our hopes and dreams of the future.

The way we use money represents many things to different people. For some it is a way of nurturing. For others it is power....

Many couples make the mistake of believing that at the end of each wedding ceremony the preacher waves some magic want that immediately fuses two distinct individuals into a single entity. *Wrong!*

Those individuals each bring with them a set of experiences, family backgrounds and values that are unique to them alone. Those experiences are powerful influences in our lives and play a major role in fashioning who we are and what we expect from the future. The way we use money represents many different things to people. For some it is a way of nurturing. For others it is power, or independence, or even a burden. It can also mean the opposite of those things. "If you don't spend money on me in a particular way, then you don't love me." "If I have money, then I'll never be trapped into a bad job, or a bad marriage." "If I control the money, then I can control you." These are just some of the underlying ideas that people have about money. It is so important that couples commit some time early on in their relationship to share their individual ideas about money. The will then have a frame of reference when they start to struggle with the questions about how they will share financial matters once they make a commitment to marriage.

The relative peace in our home with respect to finances is not simply a reflection of the compromises that we both have made in our ideas about how things should be done. We do spend time discussing the mechanics of who will be doing what, when and how often. However, I think our present circumstances are more of a reflection of our commitment to our relationship. They also reflect the subtle influence of the passage of time. As our lives together have evolved, we have been able to balance this issue against all the other things we know and respect about each other. The way we resolve our differences about how we deal with our finances is a part of the bigger picture of our commitment to each other and to the Lord. Experience has given us a basis for trusting each other more and understanding each other better. We have learned to communicate better and how to truly compromise (as opposed to merely giving in). We have found that it is easier to make decisions about how we use our money as we mature and formulate a clearer picture of our dreams and plans for the future.

I believe that this issue is one of a couple's most vivid and tangible illustrations of how different they are and, therefore, is one of the places where our relationships are most vulnerable. It is a topic that we often use to act out the stress that results from the demands of our hectic lives. A couple's system for handling their finances will change as often as the circumstances of their lives. We must keep this issue in perspective, work hard on our communication skills, give our relationship time to grow and keep our sense of humor.

Now, if you'll excuse me. It's checkbook-balancing time, and I have a few little things I have forgotten to write down! 🕮

Anita Rives holds a Masters of Social Work degree from UNC-Chapel Hill and worships with the Cole Mill Road church in Durham, NC. She may be reached at 735 Timber Bell Rd., Chapel Hill, NC 27514.

Developing a Healthy Sexual Relationship

C. David Shuping

"THEREFORE A MAN SHALL leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Gen. 2:24-25). This statement, one of the most often quoted passages in wedding ceremonies, reflects God's purposeful conclusion to His creative work in regard to the sexes. Following Hollywood's lead, many couples would naively add, "And they lived happily ever after." There is Hollywood, and then there is reality.

When reality sets in and unfulfilled expectations invade a marriage relationship, couples often begin to wonder where they went wrong. The mate who was so neat and clean on those Friday night dates now has morning dragon-breath and smelly socks. That beautifully sculptured hair suddenly looks like it did battle with an egg-beater, and lost. Children, jobs, bills, taxes. It isn't long until one or both mates begin to question, "What happened to the romance in our marriage?" And she complains to him, "You never just hold me anymore." Hopefully this doesn't sound familiar to you, but these are some of the issues counselors help couples deal with on a regular basis.

Preachers may do a marriage ceremony, but marriages themselves are grown. Marriages are built on years of love, trust, commitment, security and intimacy. Ideally, the first four create an environment for the last–intimacy. In God's plan the sexual relationship is the unique element which differentiates marriage from other relationships. However, one must not confuse intimacy with sexual practice and feelings. They are not synonymous. However, when couples work to cultivate healthy sexual attitudes within the marriage relationship, they can grow a fulfilling marriage.

At least two important dynamics must be considered in developing a healthy sexual relationship. The first is to acknowledge that sexual desire in men and women is not evil, wicked or sinful. Remnants of our nation's Puritan past are still around. Conversely, cultural abuse of sexual thought and behavior causes many people to think of sex only in terms of *having* sex. Rejecting both of these extremes, the Bible reveals that we are sexual beings. God made us this way (Gen. 1:26-31). He not only gave humans the capacity to procreate, but also the ability to experience pleasure and emotional oneness in their sexual relationship. God showed His approval of human sexuality when He sanctified it by restricting this experience to those in a marriage relationship (Heb. 13:4).

It is vital to a healthy sexual relationship that husbands and wives educate themselves concerning each other's needs.

The second dynamic involved in developing a healthy sexual relationship is the recognition of gender differences and how these affect the relationship. The needs of men and women are typically very different, a fact that can cause confusion and frustration in a marriage if not recognized. Research conducted by Dr. William Harley, Jr. suggests that the number one basic need of men in marriage in sexual fulfillment. On the other hand, the number one need for women is affection. These two words are not interchangeable and couples need to begin understanding one another's differences right here.

Men, who are visually stimulated, must remember that their wives are by nature tactile. That is, men tend to want to skip the affection and move right to the fulfillment part, being able to turn the sexual switch on and off like a porch light. Women, on the other hand, need more time and find the experience something to be savored. To use a metaphor made popular by Dr. Gary Collins in highlighting the differences between men and women, men are like a microwave oven while women are like a slow cooker. Unless marriage partners understand and seek to accommodate one another's differences and needs, the sexual relationship will rarely be a healthy or fulfilling one. Someone will be cheated and left out.

The kitchen/sex connection is not out of place. As someone has said, sex begins in the kitchen. One woman complaining of her husband said, "He comes home grumpy and without even a greeting, sits down to dinner and then watches TV for three hours. He won't talk and doesn't hear a thing I say. Then, at 11:00 he comes looking for me. 'Oh, honey,' he says, and expects me to want to have sex with him. Get real!" Her husband's response was, "Well, she's always cooking and cleaning and tending to the kids. By the time they're all put to bed she's too tired and wants to sleep." Ring a bell? This Christian couple really did love each other. The problem was that their needs were not being understood and consequently went unmet. With a little effort he began helping her with the evening chores so she wouldn't be so tired and would not feel like she was just a maid. This gave her more energy to give to her husband and she felt loved and appreciated by his help. That's what is meant by sex beginning in the kitchen.

It is no revelation that men and women are biologically and physiologically different. God made us that way and yet, He created us with the potential of experiencing a fulfilling sexual life in the context of marriage. It is vital to a healthy sexual relationship that husbands and wives educate themselves concerning the needs of the other. Couples must communicate what needs are being met and which ones are going unfulfilled. With that information in hand, and if both will take some apostolic advice and decide in honor to give preference to one another (Rom. 12:10), the couple should find that their relationship grows daily. Their sexual relationship, the capstone of their marital union, will be healthy and God-honored.

David Shuping preaches for the Hickory church of Christ and serves as administrator for Christian Care for Crisis Pregnancies, a ministry of the Hickory church. He may be contacted at 22 Colonial Ave., Granite Falls, NC 28630.

Goals and Interests

Mandy Eppley

THE ABSENCE OF COMMON GOALS and interests often motivates couples to begin counseling. Couples frequently come in to see me because they are extremely discouraged by the realization that they no longer hold common goals and interests, or even know each other. In other words, they have lost an element of their oneness.

This area of the marriage relationship is often taken for granted or put on the low end of the priority list of relationship maintenance. Couples tend to view the development and nurturing of this area of the relationship as a luxury. Who has time to devote to common goals and interests when the bills need to be paid, the kids need to be fed, the dog needs a bath, the yard needs mowing, the dishes are piled a mile high, the laundry is a mountain and the car needs a tune-up? Sound familiar? The reality is that commonality is not a luxury. It is truly a necessity and it can make the other areas of household and relationship maintenance more manageable.

Common goals and interests are a necessity for several reasons, the most important being that we want our marriage to be a continual journey of growth. We want to feel that we are on the same team and that each is being supported by the other. Commonality of goals and interests enhances team work and encourages the unity needed to face the challenges of life. If the marital relationship does not have this feature it is difficult, if not impossible, for the relationship to grow. At the very least the result will be stagnation.

There are many issues that challenge the growth of the marriage in terms of goals and interests. These issues which affect growth–whether they be external or internal issues, individual or couple oriented, male or female focused–are natural and normal. When I work with couples I want them to hear loudly and clearly that these issues which bring tons of stress to the relationship and challenge the growth of the relationship are normal.

Examples of external issues which challenge marital growth are job changes, transfers, job loss, parents aging, the economy, and the extended family. Internal issues may be personal finances, health, and child rearing. Individual oriented issues may be depression, developmental stages (mid-life transition, for instance), and one's personal, spiritual or career goals. Couple-oriented issues may be the couple's communication skills, the ability to take risks, and the willingness to be vulnerable.

The remaining issues that challenge marital growth fall under the categories of male and female focused. You know it already, but men and women are different. One fundamental reason couples struggle is that, yes, one is a man and the other is a woman. Because we are wonderfully different we each bring a unique perspective to the area of shared goals and interests. This area itself deserves much attention, but in order to stay on task I will share only a couple of insights.

One thing that has helped couples I work with is to share the information of how men and women get their need for self-esteem met. Men typically get their self-esteem needs met through work. Women typically get theirs met through relationships. The insight into this basic difference in terms of promoting self-esteem can be useful when couples are working on common goals and interests. Empathy and understanding are helpful in developing commonality (the book *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*, by Dr. John Gray, can be very helpful in defining differences between men and women).

What happens when a couple does not have common goals and interests. Very simply, they grow apart. For example, when couples have only their children in common they can find themselves strangers who stare at each other when the kids are gone. The purpose of having commonality is not only for the growth of the relationship, but also to help it weather the normal challenges and unforeseen crises that occur. Couples who share goals and interests have a special bond that is uniquely theirs. It is something each shares with the other, helping to maintain the relationship and to develop trust and intimacy within it.

Couples sometimes mistakenly define common goals and interests as meaning "I have to do what my spouse does, and I have to like what my spouse does." This is an inaccurate definition. The goal is to find areas of commonality, not to try to convert the spouse to my way of seeing the world. Further, the goal is not to completely ignore everything that interests one spouse in order to please the other spouse. Both of these approaches will end up with resentment and anger. Rather, the goal is to find what you both can enjoy and work on together.

Prayerfully approach this issue. When we come before our spouses and the Lord with an open heart and a servant attitude, the issues tend to be more workable. The following steps can be helpful: (1) Each of you make a list of your personal goals and interests, (2) share your lists with each other (couples often find that there are commonalities on their list; they just needed to stop and share with each other), (3) establish a common goal and an interest or hobby if you currently have none, (4) prioritize time to be dedicated to the development of goals and spend time together focusing on a hobby, and finally, find a niche in which to serve together.

The benefit of actively serving the Lord together cannot be emphasized enough. This is a commonality that leaves room for each person's individuality and encourages togetherness that is focused on our Lord. My spouse and I certainly fit the saying, "opposites attract." We are challenged in finding common interests to share. Our choice to serve Christ together has been a wonderful growth experience that enhances our intimacy with each other and the Lord.

In order to stay in tune as a couple and not grow apart, we must be willing to listen, to communicate, to take risks, to be vulnerable, to compromise, and to put the other before self. Most importantly, we must stay in touch with God. You know, I really don't like those car shows I go to with my husband, and I know he hates the mall. However, we do enjoy supporting each other and we benefit by putting the other before self.

Mandy Eppley has a Masters in Counseling from the UNC-Charlotte and is in private practice in Charlotte, NC. Mandy and her husband worship with the Providence Rd. church in Charlotte. She may be contacted through the church at 4900 Providence Rd., Charlotte, NC 28226.

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11:00 A.M.—The Creation/ *Don McWharter*	8:40 A.M.—The Generations of Adam & Noah & Shem & Esau/*Arthur Pigman*	8:40 A.M.—The Stealing of the Blessing/*Kent Bailey*	8:40 A.M.—"Jehovah Was With Joseph"/*James E. Ragers*
1:30 P.M.—The Corruption/ *Bill Nicks*	9:30 A.M.—Does God Excuse Lying?/*Alan Cale* Class: The Importance of Covenants in Genesis/ *Edwin Jones*	9:30 A.M.—Does God Excuse Polygamy?/*Ken Farrest* Class: The Importance of Covenants in Genesis/ *Edwin Janes*	9:30 a.m.—Does God Excuse Divination?/*Tany Reese* Class: The Importance of Covenants in Genesis/ *Edwin Janes*
7:00 P.M.—Singing/*Wiley R. Boker*	10:30 A.M.—"We Are Brethren"/*Dan McWharter* Ladies: Eve/*Lais Duncan*	10:30 A.M.—Twelve Tribes and a Daughter/*Robert Taylar* Ladies: Sarai(Sarah)/*Irene Toylor*	10:30 A.M.—The Fulfillment of Dreams/*Rad Rutherford* Ladies: Mrs. Lot/*Brenda Rutherford*
7:30 P.M.—"By Faith Joseph" (Youth)/*Dick Weber*	11:20 A.M.—The Importance of Priesthood/ *William Waadsan*	11:20 A.M.—Jacob's Dealings With Laban and Esau/*Dan Murrell*	11:20 A.M.—" God Sent Me"/*Lannie Smith*
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	3:15P.M.—The Selling of the Birthright/*Lynwaad Mothis*	3:15 P.M.—They Sold Their Brother/*Charles Brawn*	3:15 P.M.—A Promise for the Future/*Flayd Dethrow*
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	7:30 P.M.—God Put Noah in the Ark/*Paul Hayes*	7:30 P.M.—God Put Abraham in Canaan/*Matthew Parr*	7:30 P.M.—God Put Joseph on the Throne/*Eric Bonner*
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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL. 38, NO. 2 February 1996

> "And now these
> three remain:
> faith, hope, and love.
> But the greatest of
> these is love."
>
> —1 Corinthians 13:13

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(ISSN 0008-672X)
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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Road, Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: individual—$8/year ($15/2 years and $22/3 years); club of five or more—$7.50 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles—50¢/copy/month, or church mailing list (minimum 15) 60¢/copy/month.

Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes with Form 3579 to:
Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739
Address editorial matter to:
Dennis Conner
PO Box 1369
Yadkinville, NC 27055-1369
Address news items to:
Michael Mobley
301 Reed Creek Road
Mooresville, NC 28115
Address commercial advertising inquiries to:
Jacobs List, Inc.
PO Box 120
Clinton, SC 29325
Address all advertisng pertaining to the churches of Christ or its members (including related organizations) to the editor.

All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 10. Order from Carolina Christian Bookstore, PO Box 1219, Yadkinville, NC 27055 (1-800-343-1081, Monday—Friday, 9:00—6:00).

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Editorial

Dennis Conner

IN THE CROWD THAT DAY WAS A man listening attentively to Jesus. After a while he stepped forward to put a test question to the Lord, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He asked this, not because he really wanted to know the answer (he already knew it), but because he wanted to check Jesus out. He wanted to make sure that Jesus knew all the right answers; the man was checking the Lord's soundness. Jesus, though, turned the tables by asking, "What do you think?" The man gave the right answers, "Love the Lord your God...and your neighbor as yourself." To which the Lord replied (if I might paraphrase), "That's right. Now, stop theorizing about love and get on to doing it." The lawyer was put on the defensive and tried an evasive tactic, "And just who is my neighbor?" The lawyer in reality is asking the opposite of what he seems to ask. He doesn't really want to know who it is he might help. His real meaning is, "Who is *not* my neighbor." The religious Jews of the time understood that there were certain limitations upon who was worthy of help. Jesus responded with the familiar (perhaps too familiar) parable of the good Samaritan.

We know the story, just like the lawyer knew the answers. The question is, do we live the story? Hear it again for the first time.

A traveler making his way from Jerusalem to Jericho was set upon by robbers, beaten, and left for dead. A priest and then a Levite, two representatives of the religion of the day, each came across the man, crossed to the other side of the road, and went on their way. They were supposedly good, ethical men, but they refused to get involved. The reason or reasons for their lack of involvement are not given, but they obviously had them. A. M. Hunter is quite insightful here as he writes, "Human nature being what it is, good reasons have a way of presenting themselves when we are faced with a distasteful duty." As we hear the story we want to judge the two men harshly, but we can't. The truth is that I have done exactly what they did. And so have you!

Then a third party happened by. The listeners likely expected to hear Jesus say something like "an Israelite." They surely were not ready for what they did hear, "But a certain Samaritan." We need not rehearse the bad blood between Jews and Samaritans. You already know the history. And know the history firsthand Jesus makes a Samaritan the good guy in this story. This was more than just an interesting little plot twist. It was outrageous! This man, Jesus said, had compassion.

His love for his brutalized neighbor was spontaneous and extravagant as he bound the man's wounds and provided a place for him to recuperate.

"Which man," Jesus asked, "showed himself to be a neighbor?" The lawyer, perhaps, could not bring himself to say "the Samaritan," so he answers, "The one who had mercy on him." Then followed the call to obedience, "You go and do the same. Stop talking and start doing."

Jesus' point in telling this story is not only to answer the question of "who," but also to raise the question of "how." That is, how can I be a neighbor? As Neil Lightfoot has observed, the story "gets down to the bottom of what Christianity really is. There is no room for pious platitudes and hair splitting definitions, no place for Christianity in the abstract or for a religion to be seen of men. With one scene that flashes upon the screen, Jesus compels us to see that Christianity is a way of living." Yes, a *neighborly* way of living. Kingdom living is concerned about the real needs of real people. True religion is not just something to be debated, as the lawyer wanted to do, but something to be done. As Jesus said, "Go and do likewise." The ethic of the kingdom of heaven is compassion in action, not apathy. In responding to the real needs of real people we understand that there are risks and costs involved (the priest and the Levite understood this all too well). Yet, being a neighbor means that we are willing to pay the price and take the risks of caring.

Further, the story reinforces a true view of holiness. The Jews, and the Pharisees in particular, saw separation from all sorts of "unclean people" as necessary to their understanding of holiness. However, theirs was a defensive holiness accomplished by withdrawal. Jesus, on the other hand, taught an outgoing holiness of healing and selflessness that breaks down the barriers between people. Holiness is being a neighbor to people in need of God's love whoever they are and wherever and whenever we encounter them.

Jesus refused to let the self-righteous lawyer off the hook, and this story refuses to let us off the hook. Like the lawyer, we sometimes want to pick and choose our neighbors, offering ourselves to those who offend and inconvenience us the least. However, this story calls us to the active holiness of being a neighbor to those in need wherever we encounter them, loving them extravagantly and serving them selflessly. The story calls us to be like Christ.

An Opportunity to be a Neighbor

In the November issue we mentioned that Lucas Richards, the 17 year old son of Ernie Richards (the preacher for the West Columbia, SC, church) has been diagnosed with a brain tumor. Lucas is presently undergoing treatment. The Richards' medical insurance provides for most of the hospital costs, but the January issue of *Palmetto Messenger* states that the cost of the medicine is extremely high and is not covered by insurance.

The West Columbia church has established a special fund to help ease the Richards' financial burden. The situation is traumatic enough without having the added pressure of medical bills hanging over their heads. We would like to challenge our readers to be neighbors to the Richards family. If you can help, send your check to the West Columbia Church of Christ, PO Box 5785, West Columbia, SC 29171, earmarked for the Lucas Richards fund. If you cannot help financially, send a personal note of encouragement and pray for them.

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Meadows Named Director

James Meadows has been named the new Director of the East Tennessee School of Preaching in Knoxville, TN, succeeding David Pharr. Brother Meadows had been preaching for the Boiling Springs congregation in Boiling Springs, SC, for the past two years. He had endeared himself to many in the Carolinas while preaching at the Central congregation in Spartanburg several years ago.

To be honest, I greet the news of his appointment with mixed emotions. There are few men for whom I have greater respect than James. I first met James at the preachers' workshop that used to meet at the Charlotte Ave. church in Rock Hill, SC, many years ago. The workshop was conducted by David Pharr, Howard Winters and James. I was awed by his knowledge, impressed by his dignity and honored by his friendship. He was a tremendous source of encouragement to me as a young preacher back then and remains so today.

James is without question one of the fairest men I know. He is quick to give a brother the benefit of the doubt and slow to criticize and judge. Some might see that as the stuff of compromise. I see it as the stuff of Christian character. James is greatly respected throughout our fellowship for his knowledge of the Bible and his ability as a preacher.

So why the mixed emotions? Because I hate to see such a man move from the Carolinas (and not once, but twice now). I am sad for myself and the church in the Carolinas, but rejoice for James. It may sound trite, but our loss is truly ETSPM's gain. Our prayers are with him.

A late update: At this writing, Brother Meadows is scheduled to have open heart surgery on February 13, at Jackson-Madison Hospital in Jackson, TN. He will have one by-pass and a vale replacement. He is optimistic about the surgery and his return to work following a period of convalesence.

Associate Editorial

Jim Mullican

IN THE MILITARY "FRIENDLY FIRE" refers to a situation where one comes under attack from his own army; from those who should be helping. In the course of a battle, sometimes the wrong orders are given and artillery fires on a position miles away which is occupied not by the enemy, but by members of its own forces. At other times an in other ways a soldier may simply be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Tragically, a number of lives are lost in any war die to such mistakes. To be killed by one's own people due to a mistake represents a supreme tragedy.

What would we think of an army where the majority of casualties were the result of such "friendly fire?" Unfortunately, many good men have given up preaching because of harsh criticism and attacks made by their own brethren. The apostle Paul had to deal with such critics who said, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing" (2 Cor. 10:10). Men of lesser determination than Paul have been driven from the pulpit, and some have even been driven from the church altogether by "friendly fire."

Unfortunately, many good men have given up preaching because of harsh criticism and attacks made by their own brethren.

We all make mistakes at times. I certainly have, and I appreciate the tolerance of loving brethren, but let us ever be sure that we think long and carefully before we begin criticizing someone else. I find it very helpful to frequently read the account of the adulteress woman in John 8:1-11, especially verse 7. It reads, "So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first'." I have a natural tendency to be critical and judgmental, so I need to be reminded from time to time. Maybe we all do.

Jim Mullican serves the Central Haywood church of Christ in Clyde, NC, as an elder and as its preacher. You may contact him at RR 4 Box 30-A, Clyde, NC 28721.

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I Surrender All

Danny Boggs

As CAMERON MOUNGER LEFT work one morning, he noticed a man waving from inside an old Dodge in the parking lot. A couple of days later, Cameron realized that the car had not moved. The man had been sitting in his car for three days in terrible cold and snow! He had arrived in Fort Worth, where Cameron lived, three days before he was to begin a new job. For those three days he had no money or food.

Reluctantly, the man asked to borrow a dollar for a snack to tide him over until the next day. Cameron regretfully explained that he was broke. Having lost his own job some time earlier, he was working a part-time job and he and his wife were eating outdated TV dinners a friend had intercepted as they were headed for a supermarket's dumpster.

Cameron walked to his car, wishing he could have helped. Then he remembered a special dollar bill buried deep in his wallet. He took it out, admiring it one last time, and walked back to the old yellow Dodge and gave it to the hungry man. The fellow was puzzled as to why the dollar bill was covered with writing, but he accepted it with gratitude. You see, he didn't recognize the autographs Cameron had collected on the bill backstage at the final performance of the Grand Ole Opry at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville. Cameron's last dollar actually meant so much more to him than its buying power, but someone else needed it more than he did.

Paul writes that Jesus loved us so much that "being in the form of God, (He) counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5-8). Having demonstrated that kind of love, the Lord then calls His disciples to give everything they have, everything they love, and everything they are to Him (Luke 9:26-27). Christ reminds us that we serve Him by doing good even to those whom we consider the "least" (Matt. 25:40). As Scripture says elsewhere, "Thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. 13:2).

Christ reminds us that we serve Him by doing good even to those whom we consider the "least" (Matt. 25:40).

Paul continues on to say that when Jesus had given Himself for us, "God highly exalted Him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). In the same way, Jesus promises us that when a person surrenders all to Him, "he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time...and in the world to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30). Yes, he that exalts himself will be humbled, but he that humbles himself will be exalted.

Lord, help us today to surrender all!

Danny Boggs serves as one of the ministers for the Hendersonville church of Christ in Hendersonville, NC. You may contact him at 1975 Haywood Rd., Hendersonville, NC 28739.

The Art of Giving Courage

Bailey Forrest

THE REGIONAL TRACK MEET IS well attended by local fans, parents and friends. We are observing the last lap of the 440. As the pack of six runners turn the bend, voices in the crowd are raised. "Come on, Jimmy, you can do it!" yells a parent. Another runner's girlfriend cannot contain herself. She is jumping up and down, screaming for her second place sweetheart. A friend yells to his buddy in the last third of the pack, encouraging him to give it all he's got to the end. The third runner, three steps from the lead, catches an understanding glance from his father, then looks ahead with increased determination. These runners are receiving courage to finish the race. They are being told they can make it, they can finish, they can do well, they are loved. How discouraging it would be for a runner to hear, "That's okay, just drop out. You're already three runners back." How debilitating and hardening it would be for a parent to shout criticism and disapproval to his persevering son. How lonely the runner would feel to have no one in the stands to cheer him on. Encouragement is the need of the moment.

Hebrews 3:12-14 instructs us to give courage to one another daily in the spiritual marathon of life (see also Heb. 12:1-3). In the verses following (3:15 through 4:11), our spiritual trek toward God's rest is paralleled with the Israelites' journey to the land of Canaan. Many of them disobeyed, acquired hardened hearts and did not enter the rest. We must give each other courage to complete our journey in faithful obedience, lest we also harden and fail to enter the eternal rest of heaven.

The question is not whether or not you or I need courage to complete the journey. We both know that we do! We might just give up without it, our hearts calloused from the world's abuse. We even know of some who have given up. The question is how is courage given. What are the circumstances and processes of encouragement?

We know encouragement is not the result of some simple technique or formula. The cashier at the video store may wish you a nice day as you leave, but that is never the same as your friend who spoke the very same words to you that morning. The words of a polished care salesman compliment us, but after we have had time to digest them, they still leave us empty and hungry for a real uplift. Giving courage begins and ends with the proper approach and relationship.

Genesis tells us that after Adam sinned in the garden he hid himself from the Lord because he was afraid of his nakedness (Gen. 3:10). Adam's once perfect relationship with God now contained tension, apprehension and fear. Complete exposure (nakedness) before God left Adam fearful, and he hid.

Sin's natural result is to lead us to build protective layers around our heart — our real inner self —to hide its exposure with all its weaknesses and sins. We fear exposure because we fear rejection. This process holds true in our relationships with God and with others. Continued sin refines our hiding strategies while our heart becomes more and more lonely and discouraged. Luxury, career pursuit, addictive habits, shyness, talkativeness, TV watching, church work, etc., can all be cover ups of our real selves. Whatever is employed, the strategy is to hide, afraid someone will not be willing to fellowship with the real, completely known and exposed me.

The result of protective defenses in our interaction with each other is superficial fellowship. Our protective strategies bump and interact. Our hearts are protected from the pain of rejection, yet they long to be known and loved. Occasionally we dare risk a glint of exposure, testing for a response of gracious love. If criticism is reflected or if rejection is incurred, we become a little harder, a little slower to risk exposure the next time. Like the person who suffers pain from some broken romantic relationships, we protectively resist such intimacy again. If we believe God is ungracious and harsh, we avoid Him, too. Our hearts harden. We become discouraged and give up.

Encouragement occurs when the person

behind the protective strategies is reached and loved. In Hebrews 4:12-13 we read the poignant words that nothing is hidden from God's sight. He knows all. He knows the very thoughts and attitudes of our hearts. We are totally exposed to Him. As we realize this, our first response is fear. If He knows all, He knows how wretched and selfish I really am. He knows my hypocrisy. How can He want to be with me? It is then that we must believe in the mercy and grace of God. Verses 14-16 tell us that Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses. He knows what its like to be tempted like you and me. Therefore, in the state of exposure before God, we do not have to seek shelter to maintain fellowship. God understands and is merciful. We can confidently approach His gracious throne. He know that the time of need is the time we feel exposed and fearful. He helps is with his grace. His all-knowing love gives us courage and esteem. How wonderful is the grace and love of our Father through Jesus Christ!

Our communication to another must penetrate the protective layers of the heart, expose the real person and communicate grace and acceptance.

In relationships between people, encouragement is given and received on exactly the same basis. Gracious love must be communicated and believed for real encouragement to occur. In this environment words, gestures or actions can give courage. Admonishments and rebukes can even be encouraging if the recipient believes the speaker is gracious. The process, then, that we must employ to encourage each other "lest we be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" must be motivated by love and aimed at fear. Our communication to another must penetrate the protective layers of the heart, expose the real person and communicate grace and acceptance. Lawrence Crabb and Don Allender wrote in *Encouragement: The Key to Caring*, "The essence of encouragement is exposure without rejection."

So what does this mean to our daily spiritual walk? It means that we realize that the people we meet and live with are facing problems, discouragement and fear. We must discern their needs. With the motivation of live we must seek communication below the hiding layers and offer grace. They need empathy and respect. Harsh words of condemnation must be far from our lips when a person's heart is exposed to us. It is then that there is opportunity for encouragement. Do not let the opportunity pass without expressions of grace.

Remember that the key to being an encourager is to be motivated by love. Be sensitive to others' fears. There are a few skills you can practice to communicate your love and remove another's protective barriers.

First, use attentive, listening behavior. Give them eye contact. Control your own talking. Second, clarify what the person is saying. Clear up misunderstood words and phrases. Ask for more details. Reflect on what is said in order to confirm your own understanding. Third, use curiosity to explore more into the world of the person. Sincerely as for elaborations, explanations and experiences. Discover how the person feels. Fourth, learn to use the power of words. They can change a life for better or worse.

Giving courage is not a simple process. Neither can it be superficial. To be ready to give courage is to be ready to get involved with another person's life. It requires sacrifice and the expenditure of energy and emotion. It necessitates trust in God, confidence before His throne of grace and the pointing of others to Him. Very simply, it requires love.

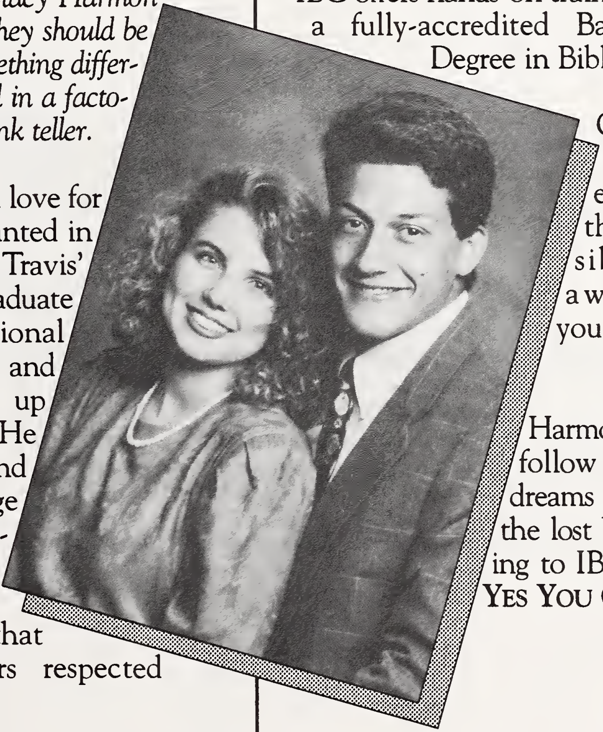
Because of the costly requirements, many of us do not actively seek out opportunities to encourage. It calls for too much investment. Yet, in the end, we reap little interest for ourselves. Only when fellowship is characterized by real encouragement can we then benefit from its heart-softening maintenance as we rest in the loving arms of God.

Bailey Forrest is a campus minister for the Brooks Ave. church in Raleigh, NC. He leads efforts to evangelize the North Carolina State University, Meredith College and St. Augustine campuses. He may be contacted at 700 Brooks Ave., Raleigh, NC 27607.

YES YOU CAN!

Travis and Stacy Harmon did!

Travis and Stacy Harmon just knew they should be focused on something different. He worked in a factory, she was a bank teller.



Early on, a love for the lost was planted in their hearts. Travis' father was a graduate of International Bible College and Travis grew up around IBC. He saw firsthand that the college was "top-notch" academically, practical, and that church leaders respected IBC.

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The Major

Rita Watson

THE ABNEY FAMILY NEWSLETTER (the Abneys are a missionary family) arrived the other day. I eagerly look forward to news from Brent and Heather as well as others from the mission team. In this newsletter there was news of Josiah's birth and the ongoing work of the church, but it was the story of the Major that gripped me on this day. Allow me to share it with you as it appeared in the newsletter:

"The first time I ever met the Major, Mark Moore and I (Brent Abney) were in the parlor of one of Jinja's more well-known prostitutes. It is a long story, but we did not know her profession at the time. The Major was a military man, as his moniker might suggest; and his real name was always too difficult for me to recall, so I just stuck to calling him 'the Major.' I remember very well his handshake on the occasion of our first meeting – it was strong and confident. But it paled in comparison to the booming voice he commanded. This man sounded just like the guy on Cable News Network who declares, 'This is CNN International.' His huge physique was well suited to his voice and he literally frightened me when he introduced himself that morning. One of his massive hands pinched a lit cigarette; the other was putting mine in a vise-like grip. Smoke was flaring out of both nostrils and streaking through his teeth as his greeting resonated off the four walls. I was definitely intimidated.

The second time I saw the Major, he was walking past my yard while I was out playing with Zachary. I wished him a good day in Lusoga and we shared a brief exchange. I learned that he lived just two doors down (a huge place, but in complete disrepair) in between our house and the Moore's. I saw him out walking on several more occasions over the next few months, always leisurely strolling through the neighborhood, his booming 'hello' startling me every time. Then there was a period in which I never saw him.

One day while walking up the street to play basketball with Mark, I passed him in his driveway. 'Major, how are you?' I asked, but I already knew the answer. He looked thin and terrible. I immediately remembered our firs encounter and the location thereof. He coughed out a reply to the tune that he was fine, and I asked him on the spot if he'd like to go to church with me, or just study the Bible sometime. His response still haunts me. 'Yes, by all possible means,' he said. 'I'm really very interested.' 'Okay, we'll do it,' I replied, and dribbled on to Mark's house, anxious to tell Mark that I thought the guy had AIDS.

We just saw the Major again, Mark and I. This time, though, it was as his wife pulled back the sheet for a few seconds as she suppressed emotion that would later burst into grievous wails. The Major was so tiny that I could have picked him up with one arm. He was in his now baggy full uniform for the last time, a Ugandan flag carefully placed by his lifeless feet.

The Major's eleven year old son has been hanging out a lot around our house lately. He plays soccer in our yard, keeps Zachary entertained, and attends church with us occasionally. In fact, it was the son who tearfully informed us about the major's death just a few minutes ago. I hope that we can find the time to tell the son what we never told the father. Pray that we do."

I felt a great sense of loss as I read about the Major. I cried for him. I cried for Brent and Mark. Mostly, though, I cried for myself and for all those I let pass out of my life without talking to them about the one needful thing.

Which one of us is not guilty of having allowed someone – a neighbor, a co-worker, a teacher, a relative, a friend – to "pass on"? Which one of us is not guilty of letting the seemingly urgent things of this life get in the way of the Important Thing? Let us all pray that we will not neglect to "to into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation." May there not be any more Major's in our lives.

Rita Watson may be contacted at 903 Oak St., Marion, NC 28752.

A Balanced Remembrance and Evangelism

Robert A. MacDonald

THE TIME WAS NEAR. JESUS SPOKE to His disciples concerning the cross that He knew was coming. Yet, He was thinking beyond the cross when He said He would "on the third day be raised to life" (Matt. 16:21). The opened tomb was one His mind as well–His resurrection and ascension as our divine Savior, Master, Lord and friend.

Yes, He arose! Christianity is not possible without the opened tomb. He lives! The opened tomb is where our "sorrow shall be turned into joy" (John 16:20b). In the garden Jesus prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken away from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39b). He possessed a human dread about death on the cross, but still He knew divinely of the opened tomb that would follow. Earlier He had told the disciples in John 14:1-2, "Let not your heart be troubled...in my Father's house are many mansions...I go to prepare a place for you."

How we observe the communion is especially important for reaching those who might be visiting our worship assemblies.

The Christian is to be joyful over this message of Jesus. Yet I wonder if this is reflected in our practice of the Lord's Supper? Can we be joyful also at communion? Through the opened tomb we are offered eternal life by our risen Savior . Could this not be expressed in the communion as well? How we observe the communion is especially important for reaching those who might be visiting our worship assemblies. For many the Sunday morning worship is a testing ground to see if this is where they might want to "go to church."

Why do I write of evangelizing in an article about communion? Because of the impression the way we observe communion may leave on our visitors. Let our visitors first be humbled and then awed by our solemn remembrance of Jesus at the taking of the bread and the cup. Let them feel our sorrow at the cross. Yet, let them also see the joy of the opened tomb. As part of our remembrance we should be able to speak joyfully about the opened tomb.

There may be only one lost sheep in our midst, but that one is watching us at the communion table. That one lost sheep is timid in our midst. He is not sure of us. No organ? No piano? No choir? He may not know the purpose of our communion service. How conscious of his presence are we? Do we give any thought to how our visitor perceives the Lord's Supper and our observance of it? To him it might look like a funeral, and a funeral won't bring him back. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me"

(Luke 22:19). What is it we remember? Just His death? Or do we remember His whole life, His death and His resurrection? We remember it all, and all that Jesus has done brings joy to us.

Notwithstanding, because of tradition some of us do not think that the communion is a time to express joy even though Jesus said "your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (John 16:20). Christianity is possible because Jesus not only died, but was also raised. This is reason to rejoice, not be sorrowful! We should not hesitate to express it. Sometimes we are in danger of neglecting the emphasis the New Testament gives to the resurrection.

There is a way to accommodate a greater sense of balance in the communion observance. The joy Jesus prophesied was *three days* after His death on the cross, when the tomb was found opened. The sorrow of Mary and the others was turned to joy. Perhaps as part of our symbolism at the table, could our sorrow be turned into joy *three minutes* after taking the bread and the cup? Could we introduce the message of resurrection after we sing a hymn–a joyful "He Is Risen" type of song–by having someone speak joyfully of the meaning of the opened tomb and of what Jesus' resurrection and ascension means to us in daily life and in the hope of eternal life? This would allow the lost in our midst to see our joy over the resurrection. They might find comfort being with evangelizers who are joyful. Let them sing that joyful hymn with us. Let our evangelizing love for the lost be strengthened by our awareness of Jesus statement, "If you loved me, you would rejoice, for I go to the Father who is greater than I" (John 14:28b).

Jesus was the victor over death, yet our visitors do not see that when we are only in sorrowful remembrance at the communion table. Will we instead have a balanced remembrance of Jesus? Will communion become a memorial first, and then a celebration? Will the lost in our midst see that Christianity is a joyous experience with joyful people? As Jesus said, "Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy" (John 16:22).

Brother MacDonald is 81 years young. His continued love affair with the Word of God serves as a marvelous example for us all. You may contact him at 600 Carolina Village Rd., #31, Hendersonville, NC 28792.

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My Faith Was Judged

Paul Jackson

THE OTHER NIGHT MY WIFE, SHELL, and I had Tom and Jane (not their real names, of course) over to our house for fellowship. Shell had spoken to Jane over the phone but had not met her yet. We wanted to get to know this young, newly married couple better. They had just arrived in our city and had few friends.

Upon their arrival we exchanged pleasantries. We even looked at the wedding pictures and video they brought with them. And we shared a great deal spiritually as well. You know, the usual God, Jesus and church talk. Tom and Jane were strong Christians who loved the Lord very much. Needless to say, Shell and I were excited to learn of their faith.

Why do we feel compelled to judge one another's faith in the Lord?

Suspicious Of Our Faith

As the evening went on, however, something kept gnawing at me. You know the feeling you get deep down inside when something just doesn't seem quite right? After a while I realized what was wrong. Tom and Jane seemed suspicious, even questioning, but not of our motives in asking them over. They seemed suspicious of our faith. Their questions were designed to check out our faith. It was as if they had judged us and knew that our faith wasn't on par with theirs; perhaps even deficient in some way. Ouch! I sensed from them a strong air of self-righteousness when it came to matters of faith and church; that their brand of faith was a truer or purer kind. I wondered if they thought that having anything to do with us would somehow defile them and their purity? It was an interesting experience, to say the least.

Don't Judge My Faith!

I found myself wanting to shout, "But I'm just a Christian, too! And I really love Jesus. I'm trusting Him alone for my salvation and I believe the Bible is God's inspired Word. I try real hard to live my life by its teachings. So, please...don't judge my faith!" But I didn't say any of that.

The evening ended and we said our "good-byes" with a promise to get together again soon. Something told me that we probably never would.

Lessons Learned

Still, at least two good things came out of our evening with Tom and Jane. First, I was reminded of how ugly a sectarian spirit is. I felt what it was like to be on the receiving end of having one's faith questioned and judged. Second, this experience has made me even more determined to love and receive others "just as Christ also received us" (Rom. 15:4).

Questions to Ponder

Why is it so difficult to love one another? Why do we feel compelled to judge one another's faith in the Lord? Why are arrogance and self-righteousness so easily tolerated? Why don't we take Jesus' prayer in John 17 more seriously?

Why?

Paul Jackson and his wife, Shelli, live with their three children in Fayetteville, NC.

A Philosophy For Living

Amos Allen

I DON'T KNOW MANY PEOPLE WHO have a stated philosophy for life. Few of us know (and have made known) the reason for which we are here, why we go to work, or why we conduct ourselves the way we do. We are content to simply exist. Even fewer know what we are willing to die for. One thing us for sure–the word "sacrifice" is seldom found in anyone's philosophy of living.

One thing is for sure–the word "sacrifice" is seldom found in anyone's philosophy of living.

No too long ago five of us who worked in Kenya at the same time got together. Kevin Kehl mentioned the night he got his vehicle stuck deep in the mud. Far from home he waited, and at 2:00 a.m. Stephen Meeks found him. If the roles had been reversed, the outcome would have been the same. Sacrifice. Of such is real life.

At our reunion I met a family who own a large house on lots of land. They appear to be very well to do and some people might be tempted to think that this family bought such a large house out of a concern for status. Actually, they bought the house and land so they can host guests and provide a place for inner-city children to visit and play. That's really living.

This family reminds me that many a Kenyan brother in Christ abandoned his old house and built a larger one so he could host all the Christians in his village. Many a Kenyan sister joyfully hauled water and firewood so she could feed those who attended the meeting. They're living, not just existing.

Jesus demonstrated the quality of sacrifice with His every breath and action, and others caught the idea. Men and women learned how to really live by watching Jesus. It is said of the first Christians that they "out lived, out loved, and out thought" the people of their day. That wasn't necessarily their goal. It was just the result of their faith in Christ.

Jesus once told about a man who was robbed and left for dead (Luke 10). You know the story. Two good men assessed the situation and decided that the risks of serving were too great. Another man, a Samaritan of all things, looked things over and got busy serving. He made some sacrifices. He went out of his way to help. He lost some time. He even lost some money. Consequently, this was the man Jesus approved. Through this story Jesus said that the way to live is to be a neighbor and sacrifice for another. A philosophy for living that does not involve sacrifice is questionable. A lifestyle that ignores the needs of others is misguided. For whom and what are you willing to make sacrifices?

Let me share a story with you. It comes from *A Tale of Three Virtues* by Steven Mosley. It is the true story of Elaine Esposito, who went into a coma after appendix surgery in 1941. After some time in the hospital Elaine's parents took her home, at which time her mother learned to be a nurse. Mr. Esposito worked three jobs to pay the enormous expenses incurred in caring for Elaine. Her parents bathed, turned, fed and loved their sleeping beauty. They did this until Elaine died in 1978, never recovering from her coma. Her parents gave, with no return, for 47 years.

From one perspective, it was a waste of time and energy. Yet from another, it's what life is all about. How do we know when to sacrifice and when to move on? There isn't a formula for making that decision. At best it's risky to love, to think, and to live compassionately. Still, we must if we will be followers of Christ. May God help us to become people who live and die for others. May we become a people who do more than just exist.

Amos Allen preaches for the Meadowbrook Rd. church in Asheboro, NC. Prior to his move to Asheboro, Amos lived and preached in Kenya for eleven years as a missionary. He may be contacted at 631 Meadowbrook Rd., Asheboro, NC 27203.

Don't Ask, Don't Tell

Paul Jarrett

IF YOU HAVE ANY ACQUAINTANCE at all with current events, you are probably familiar with the phrase, "Don't ask, don't tell." It is a concise description of the Clinton administration's policy regarding homosexuals in the military. "Don't ask" means the military won't ask recruits about their sexual orientation. "Don't tell" means the recruits are not to publicize that same orientation.

Those on both sides of the debate over this policy see it as unworkable. Those who are pushing for acceptance of homosexual conduct say it doesn't go far enough in granting approval for open expression of their "alternative lifestyle." Those opposing this policy see it as granting tacit approval to homosexuality and ultimately opening the door for full acceptance of what is seen as a destructive practice.

I have called attention to this "don't ask, don't tell" policy and the general consensus that it will not work to make a more serious point. It has struck me that what we agree is unworkable as a policy for dealing with a problem in the military has been and is being practiced as a general rule in the Lord's army. Whether you are talking about homosexuality or any number of other sins (including other forms of sexual immorality, gossip, covetousness, lying, hatred, etc.) we seem to have adopted a "don't ask, don't tell" policy in the Lord's army. Christians seem content to live by this policy in their relationships with one another.

Perhaps its embarrassment over our own sins, or fear of being accused of being judgmental, but whatever the reason, we avoid confronting one another regarding sin. When we know that a brother or sister is involved in sin, we don't go to them. We "don't ask." And again, whether its embarrassment, guilt, or (God forbid) outright hypocrisy we avoid acknowledging our own sins before our brethren. We "don't tell."

His intention was for there to be honesty in relationships and for that honesty to strengthen and purify us.

It may be that we have experienced someone's resentment or anger when we expressed concern over their conduct. Perhaps we've experienced rejection or condemnation when we acknowledged some weakness or sin of our own. More likely, we've only imagined that we would experience such reactions if we expressed concern or confessed fault. Maybe we've simply fallen victim to living in a society where we've been told our business is our own business and each of us are free to live as we choose, unaccountable to anyone except ourselves.

Whatever the reason, I see strong evidence of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy at work in the church. At the risk of offending, I simply want to point out that what won't work in the United States military definitely won't work in the Lord's army. Furthermore, "don't ask, don't tell" is the policy of men and not the policy of the Commander in Chief under whom each Christian serves.

The Scriptures make it plain that we (especially those in positions of oversight) are *commanded to ask.* Certainly, there is a right way to ask and there are a host of wrong ways to ask.

However, texts such as Galatians 6:1 and Matthew 18:15-18 (I suggest these be read at this point) do not give us the right to adopt a "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

The Scriptures make it equally plain that we are all *commanded to tell* as well. Again, there are appropriate and inappropriate ways to tell and appropriate and inappropriate responses on the part of those who are told. Still, texts such as James 5:16 and Matthew 5:23-26 do not give us the right to adopt a policy of not confessing.

Finally, note that Christ did not reject the "don't ask, don't tell" policy and institute a policy of active restoration and confession in order to encourage us to indulge in passing judgment on and gossiping about one another. His intention was for there to be honesty in relationships and for that honesty to strengthen and purify us. Judging and gossiping represent conduct that is contrary to the Spirit of our calling and is never to be tolerated in the life of the disciple of Jesus.

Christ rejected the "don't ask, don't tell" policy because it is unworkable and detrimental. When sin goes unconfronted and/or unconfessed, it will ultimately destroy the individual and the church. On the other hand, when we actively seek to restore the weak and we confess our own weaknesses we become stronger individually and as a church.

Paul Jarrett is a frequent contributor to Carolina Christian and preaches for the Archdale church of Christ in Charlotte, NC. You can contact him at 1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210.

Brotherhood News

Mike Mobley

KANNAPOLIS, NC...The Kannapolis church of Christ is planning a homecoming and needs to know the addresses for a few of its former preachers. They are Leon Gibson, Jack Amos, George Kessler, Adrian Maynard, George Marshall, Mike Lane and Mitchell Floyd. If you know the location of any of these brothers, or if you have any information that would be helpful, please send the address to the Kannapolis church of Christ, 2315 Concord Lake Rd., Kannapolis, NC 28081. Or, you can call the church office at (704) 786-3510. Please respond as soon as possible. YADKINVILLE, NC...The tenth annual Small Church Workshop will be conducted May 9-10. This year's theme will be "Centered in God." For more information you may call (910) 679-8924 or 679-3499. ROCKY MOUNT, NC...The 52nd annual Carolina Lectures will be hosted by the Hill St. church in Rocky Mount, April 8-11. This year's theme is "When We Walk With the Lord." Call (919) 977-7556 for more information. FLORENCE, AL...Students and faculty at International Bible College baptized 448 people during campaigns in 1995 and restored 216 in sixteen states and the countries of Latvia, Poland, Panama, Canada, Benin, Gabon, Togo, Scotland, Malta, Guyana, Romania, Ukraine, Thailand, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Albania, Mexico, the Philippines and the U.S. "We have a strong commitment to world evangelism here at IBC," says Dennis Jones, president of the college. "From the beginning, we have emphasized practical training along with academic training. This means we work with churches in a variety of ways. Our students are required to go on a campaign each semester as well as work with a local church on a weekly basis in eight areas of evangelism." IBC grants a four-year degree in Bible.

Send all news items to Mike Mobley at 301 Reed Creek Rd., Mooresville, NC 28115.

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Warnings

Tim Sensing

INDIANA CLAIMS A HIGH PERCENTAGE of tornadoes. Twice, tornadoes have twisted nearby towns. When I lived in Lafayette, Moticello, IN was devastated. One of my good friends' father died then. When I lived in Washington, Petersburg, IN suffered severely. In both cases, nature's breath struck with little warning.

Tornado sirens and early warning systems are prevalent throughout Indiana. Often at noon, the sirens would blare their practice warning so all could be reassured the system was working. I heard those sirens so often that I became, nonchalant about their intended meaning. Even if I heard the siren at some other time, I did not notice it. It was like living by a railroad: it didn't take long before you were sleeping like a baby when the 2:00 a.m. express rumbled through. The cry, "Wolf!," too often, dulls our sensitivities to danger. It's like the brake light on my car that never goes out. The warning is unheeded, because I have grown confident in my own understanding of the facts.

It happens all around us. The child becomes immune to the parent's admonitions. The patient eventually ignores the doctor's instructions. The spouse tunes out the nagging mate. The person in the pew sleeps soundly during the recitation from the pulpit. We are bombarded on every side by words, warnings, advertisements, and conversations. Language becomes prating. Conversation becomes chatter. Preaching becomes rhetoric. How do we explain that even the best sermons proclaimed by the finest preachers are only opportunities for snoring. You see, it is not boring sermons that are not listened to, it's the good ones!

Reminder

Preaching is the proclamation of the gospel. The gospel is the power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Preaching is not merely a word about God and His redemptive acts, but it is a Word of God. As the Word of God, preaching is a redemptive event. God has chosen unworthy vessels to deliver His Word to human lives (2 Cor. 4:7).

> *"The Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account"*
> *(Heb. 4:12–13).*

If the Word of God is not penetrating one's heart, it is not the Word's fault. One must look to one's own heart to make sure it does not become calloused. Likewise, Paul said, "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the (*hrematos*, spoken) Word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).

Warnings are for our benefit. The wise one heeds the warning label on "Drano": *Do Not Ingest!* Warning labels on pharmaceuticals are there for a reason. Read and be wise. A door marked *High Voltage* or *Radiation* should be entered with caution—if entered at all! Warnings are for safety and welfare. Warnings are for instruction. Warnings are good. Thank You, Father, for the warnings.

> *"We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?"*
> (Heb. 2:1–3).

Hear then the Word of the Lord!📖

Tim Sensing serves the Mebane Street church in Burlington, NC. Contact him at PO Box 1861, Burlington, NC 27216-1861.

Who Am I?

Adam, God made out of dust,
but thought it best, to make me first.
So I was made before man,
to answer God's most holy plan.
A living being I became,
and Adam gave to me my name.
I, from his presence then withdrew
and more of Adam I never knew.
I did my maker's law obey
nor ever from it went astray.
Thousands of miles I go in fear,
but seldom on earth appear.
For purposes wise which God did see,
he put a living soul in me.
A soul from me he did claim
and took from me the soul again.
So when from me the soul had fled,
I was the same as when first made.
And without hands, feet or soul,
I travel on from pole to pole.
I labor hard by day, by night—
to fallen men I give light.
No right or wrong can I conceive,
the Scripture I cannot believe.
Although therein my name is found,
they are to me an empty sound.
No fear of death doth trouble me,
real happiness I never see.
Now when these lines you slowly read,
go search your Bible with all speed.
For that my name is written there,
I honestly do declare.
Who am I?

Answer in next month's issue.

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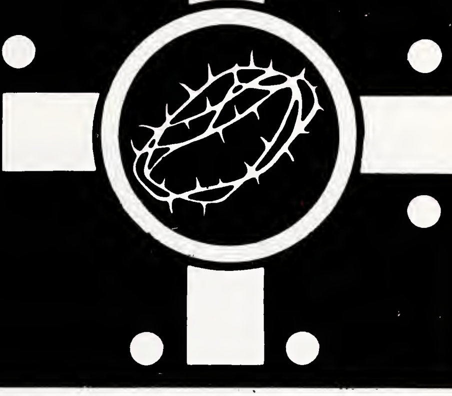
CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

VOL. 38, NO. 3 March 1996



A Holy Church

Studies in Titus

Carolina Christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
EDITORIAL & PUBLICATION STAFF
Dennis Conner, Interim Editor
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
Jim Mullican, Associate Editor
Michael Mobley, News Editor

CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Road, Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: individual—$8/year ($15/2 years and $22/3 years); club of five or more—$7.50 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles—50¢/copy/month, or church mailing list (minimum 15) 60¢/copy/month.

Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes with Form 3579 to:
Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739
Address editorial matter to:
Dennis Conner
PO Box 1369
Yadkinville, NC 27055-1369
Address news items to:
Michael Mobley
301 Reed Creek Road
Mooresville, NC 28115
Address commercial advertising inquiries to:
Jacobs List, Inc.
PO Box 120
Clinton, SC 29325

Address all advertisng pertaining to the churches of Christ or its members (including related organizations) to the editor.

All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceeding month. For example, an item to be included in the July issue must be received by June 10. Order from Carolina Christian Bookstore, PO Box 1219, Yadkinville, NC 27055 (1-800-343-1081, Monday—Friday, 9:00—6:00).

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Editorial: Insatiable Appetites

Dennis Conner

HE SAID, "BLESSED ARE THEY which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." The people who heard Him that day knew whereof He spoke. They lived in a land that often knew famine and drought, sending much of the populace hungering and thirsting. They could identify with these words of Jesus. And He knew whereof He spoke. Jesus knew the gnawing pangs of a forty-day fast. He knew from personal experience the intensity and power of the urges of the physical appetite. What better way, then, to illustrate the spiritual pangs that must characterize both the seeker and the citizen of the kingdom of heaven?

Hungering and thirsting are commonly used in the Scriptures to express strong spiritual desires and needs. It may well be that there is no more powerful drive in human nature than the hunger drive. When the belly is empty and the mouth is parched from thirst, a man will do almost anything to see his physical appetite satisfied. So it must be with the spiritual appetite of the soul. The picture in this fourth beatitude is that of a man ravenous with hunger, parched and panting with thirst. It tells us that when we long for righteousness as much as such a man as this longs for food and drink, then we are among the blessed of the kingdom.

The story is told of a man who came to Gautama Buddha asking that he might be shown the way to life and deliverance. Buddha led the man to a river. When they had gone out into the water, Buddha grabbed the man and held his head under the water. Finally, in a last gasp before drowning the man pulled himself free of Buddha's grasp and exploded above the water. Buddha quietly asked him, "When you thought you were drowning, what did you desire most?" The gasping man replied, "Air!" To this Buddha responded, "When you want salvation as much as you wanted air, then you shall have it." Jesus here depicts a desire for righteousness that is no less urgent and desperate.

What we must understand, however, is that the spiritual craving Jesus speaks of cannot be satisfied by anything in self or the world. We live today in a society of insatiable appetites. People crave pleasure, but after a while one's reckless abandonment to his sensual nature leaves him empty and unfulfilled. They crave money, but there is never enough to fill up a life. William Law wrote, "All that is in the world are empty cups and it does not matter which you take or how many you take, there is no quenching one's thirst out of an empty cup." And that's all the world is–one big empty cup. Those who hunger for physical, worldly things shall never be satisfied. Appetites of the flesh can only be satisfied for the moment, if at all. God alone can fill our craving, as the psalmist well understood when he wrote, "For he satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" (Psalm 107:9). Thus, Christ bids us to come and drink out of the full cup of God's righteousness, not the empty cup of the world.

This beatitude challenges us. Do we care for and crave righteousness with anything like the intensity of a man starving for food and begging for his thirst to be quenched? Will we drink of the empty cup of the world or the bottomless cup of God's righteousness? What is the supreme ambition of our lives–righteousness of self-glorification?

Sit down at the table of the Lord...and be filled!

Carolina Christian Classic Reprint

Though his pilgrimage through this world ended nearly eight years ago, Howard Winters is still revered as perhaps the most influential preacher ever among churches of Christ in the Carolinas. His influence was most effectively felt through the pages of *Carolina Christian.* For seventeen years Howard served as the esteemed editor of the magazine. It was one of the great loves of his life and was unquestionably one of his greatest ministries. During his tenure as editor Howard wrote nearly 700 editorials–all of them good, but some of them classics.

One of his most prominent editorial themes was that of unity. Howard used the editorial page to promote unity among the people of God and to assail those attitudes and practices that threatened it. A case in the point is the editorial titled "Two Extremes," first appearing in the January, 1984 issue and reprinted in this month's issue.

No one who knew Howard even casually would dare label him a "liberal" or a "compromiser." A man of firm conviction and keen intellect, Howard possessed a passion for truth. He pursued it with passion and preached it with passion. Yet, he pursued and preached the truth with a remarkable sense of balance. For all of these reasons Howard had gained the respect of brethren throughout the southeastern United States.

The church today, and the church in the Carolinas, finds itself in desperate need of balance. With this in mind, we hope you will profit from his article "Two Extremes," a *Carolina Christian* classic reprint. From time to time we hope to share other articles from the past that speak to current needs.

Angels' Food

A fundraising effort for Carolina Bible Camp & Retreat Center spearheaded by Betty Woodhouse of Raleigh, NC, has resulted in a remarkable cookbook. Titled *Angels' Food*, this cookbook consists of 548 pages and more than a thousand recipes *with every recipe being tested* before its inclusion in the book. It took about two years to produce, but was certainly worth the wait.

The book sells for $19.95 with all proceeds going to the camp. It would be a valuable addition to any kitchen and makes a great gift. If you would like a copy, $22.50 ($2.55 of that is for shipping) to *Angels' Food*, PO Box 52276, Raleigh, NC 27612. It's worth every penny and with every bite of every recipe you have the satisfaction of knowing that you are eating for a worthy cause!

Church Spotlight

This month the church spotlight shines on the Bamberg church of Christ in Bamberg, SC. Energetically served by brother Coy Crosby, the Bamberg church is an inspiring example of what great things God can do with a small church. The temptation of many small churches is to succumb to the "grashopper complex," bemoaning the lack of size, strength and resources. Not the Bamberg church. Once near death as a congregation, God has breathed new life into this community of faith. The brothers and sisters there believe. They believe that the gospel is powerful and God is great and that they are His instruments to get that message out. We exhort all churches, large and small, to imitate their example of faith.

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Guest Editorial

Mike Mobley

THIS MONTH'S ISSUE IS A LOOK AT the theme "A Holy Church" and is based on the book of Titus. This letter is Paul's instruction to a young evangelist in Crete named Titus and in it he exhorts Titus to train the church how to be God's people. There are so many aspects and avenues of the ministry of the local church, but teaching and training are fundamental.

A brief survey of the letter shows us that Titus was instructed to train the church in three areas: establish the leadership of God's people (1:5-9) because they need to be protected (1:10-16), establish the training of God's people (2:1-10) because they need to be purified, and to remind God's people of their redemption and conversion (3:1-8) because evil is about (3:9-14). Much of the content of this letter has to do with the kind of church our congregations are to be. It lays down some essential principles that help to answer the question of how to be a church.

As you read these articles you will find both a description of holiness applied to the church and the motivation to holiness. I am convinced that you will come to understand that holiness, as God teaches it, is not mechanical or scientific, but spiritual and personal. The church as the people of God lives in a world that rejects God. We need direction. We need to keep focused on who we are and what we are doing here.

Two truths emerge from this letter to Titus and these articles. First, holiness is not simply a fact, but a life-changing relationship with God that completely transforms our thinking and behavior. Second, we must be able to recognize the evil that resides in the world and we must be willing to confront it. This truth underscores the need for strong leadership. Without it the church can easily fall prey to the evil influences that would seek to rule and ruin her.

It is our prayer and hope that you will benefit from this issue and find it a blessing for your personal or group Bible study.📖

Blameless: A Holy Rule

Wilson Burton

LIVING UP TO THE QUALIFICATIONS of elders as set forth in Titus 1:6-9 is not so monumental if one can get by the first one–being blameless. We wonder how any man could be considered blameless. Yet, this is probably the main attribute that makes a Christian man fit to serve. The other qualifications seem to show how we would measure a blameless man. Thayer defines the term "blameless" to mean one who "cannot be called to account, unreprovable, unaccused." In his booklet, *Elders, Their Work and Qualifications*, brother E. R. Harper makes the following statement concerning blamelessness, "This does not mean that he can't make a mistake and that his judgment could not be wrong, but it does imply he is to be a man who is morally fit, not dishonest but dependable, upright in his dealings with his fellowman. This needs to be heeded carefully."

In considering an elder's relationship with his fellowman, we suggest that he should have the respect of all those who know him. Thus, a blameless reputation reaches beyond the congregation. What does the next door neighbor think of him? Is he seen as kind, friendly, hospitable, and sober? Is he known in the neighborhood as a holy and just person? At work, should an elder be thought of differently than a non-Christian? What about his temper control with fellow employees? Is he in control of himself in all situations (temperate)? In the congregation, is he a respected person? Is his reputation such that the congregation is ready and willing to follow his lead as a shepherd?

Further, an elder should be blameless in his ability to lead and to teach (verses 6-7). A man with questionable character traits that prevent him from getting along with others in a fair, equitable and positive manner will neither lead, serve nor teach effectively. A blameless elder must be capable of bringing others to a level of learning that leads them in the direction of becoming like Christ. He brings them to this level of understanding not only by words, but also by the way he lives. In exhorting elders to "hold fast to the faithful word," Paul would have them to be stable in the faith and to model the word in their lives.

Each quality listed in the letter to Titus is important and distinct in determining whether a man is the type of individual God wants to shepherd His sheep. Growth in character and behavior would contribute to effectiveness in the work of an elder. A mature, blameless shepherd would realize his own imperfections, yet would strive daily toward perfection. As messed up as our society is today with few morals, with everyone wanting to do what they want as they show little or no respect for man or God, blamelessness in character is one of the great needs of the day.

While God expects all Christians to strive to lead blameless lives, He especially expects an elder to model in his own life what he asks of others. God looks upon the heart, and the elder must have a heart for God. We elders can be and must be blameless in the eyes of God and in the eyes of our fellowman by maintaining a life that will be an encouragement to those with whom we live, work and worship.

Wilson Burton serves as an elder for the church in Kannapolis, NC.

The Holy Truth Must Be Guarded

Paul Mobley

FROM THE BEGINNING OF TIME God has revealed His truth to the world and He has always carefully guarded both His truth and those who followed it in full faith. Yet, there have always been those who would distort His holy truth. Today, as in biblical times, there are many from the outside who would seek to distort or change the Word of God. Some would do this unintentionally while others would do it deliberately. However, harm can also come from within the church. And again, some would distort or misuse the truth unintentionally, while others would do so deliberately. When Paul wrote to Titus, he was concerned that the truth be protected.

Jesus the Christ has stated that His words and the will of God will never be changed so long as this world exists (Luke 21:33). Those who faithfully follow Him will not be surprised in the last day, knowing that through Christ they have a right to the tree of life. Those who pursue paths that are different from the Word of God will be surprised, and sadly so.

How God intervenes to protect His word is not fully understood. The answering of prayers is one way, but even then we do not fully understand how His providence is carried out. Another method of protecting the truth and the church is revealed in Titus 1:10-16. Having left Crete himself, Paul left Titus there with the mission of attending to things that were in need, including the ordaining of elders in every city. Titus had been associated with Paul for about fifteen years and was well qualified for the work. One of the great responsibilities of elders is to stop the mouths of deceivers who subvert the church.

The apostle did not mince words in describing the false teachers and wayward persons, calling them vain talkers and deceivers whose real concern is for personal gain (verses 10-11). Money and power are two of the greatest deceivers. Paul added to his description the words of one of the Cretans' own teachers, possibly Epimenides, who said that Cretans are liars, evil, and lazy. Paul applies this to the false teachers in Crete. There were those whose service to God was nothing but lip service and was motivated by personal gain. The situation was not new, but it was one that needed sharp reproof.

The urgency of dealing with the false teachers is made more graphic by the words Paul used in verse 11, "whose mouths must be stopped." Paul wanted to keep the Word of God unperverted and to keep all converts loyal and faithful to Christ. And notice that he further directed Titus to "rebuke them sharply," hoping to return them to the truth and to keep them sound in the faith. Sharp rebuke is not foreign to the Christian spirit. Remember the example of Jesus when He cleansed the temple and drove out those who defiled the temple. On another occasion, Paul had directed Timothy to turn away from such persons when they refuse to submit to the will of God (2 Tim. 3:7, 15). In his word to Titus Paul acknowledges that there are some who just simply refuse to submit to God. He notes that to the pure (the faithful) all things are pure, while to the deceivers those same things are not pure. They turn everything that is good into something that is evil.

An important part of Titus' work was to ordain elders in every city according to the requirements given in Titus 1:5-9. Having done that and having given them an example of how deviant teachings were to be handled, the elders in each location would then assume this responsibility. In this way the truth would be protected from the false teachers.

In all of his letters Paul was concerned with converting souls, keeping the brethren holy and without blemish, and then developing leadership in the churches. In much the same way, all Christians and leaders in the church have the responsibility to keep the truth pure and the church holy. Elders especially–through prayer, teaching and, if necessary, corrective discipline–have this responsibility.

Thus, Titus 1:10-16 is instructive in how to deal with those who would pervert the truth and how to keep the church holy. Paul had told the Ephesians that through His death, Christ had presented to Himself a church that was holy and without blemish. It is critically important that each Christian do his part in protecting the holiness of the church by protecting the holiness of the truth.

Paul Mobley is the father of this month's guest editor, Mike Mobley. Paul may be contacted at RR 3 Box 410, Cynthiana, KY 41031.

Holy Men and Women

Paul Jarrett

THE APOSTLE PAUL DOES NOT USE the word "holy" in Titus 2:1-8. However, it seems to be a fair and accurate way to summarize Paul's expectations for Christian men and women. Taken together, the character traits Paul sets forth add up to a call for holiness on the part of both men and women of all ages. That this is the case should not surprise us in light of the fact that it has always been God's desire that His people be a holy people in all their behavior (see 1Pet. 1:14-16).

Despite being *called* to be holy, very few Christians would claim to *be* holy. In far too many cases this may be an honest assessment of our conduct. However, for the most part I sense that a reluctance to claim to be holy comes from a misunderstanding of what it means biblically to be holy. While holiness when applied to God means *perfection*, when applied to man it involves *location* and *direction.*

Christians are holy first of all as a matter of location. The words "holy" and "saint" have the same root meaning in that both are suggestive of that which has been set apart to God's service. Hence, just as we are "saints by calling" (see 1 Cor. 1:2), having been sanctified in Christ Jesus, we have also been made holy in Him. Thus, in one sense we are holy by virtue of the fact that we are in Christ.

Secondly, as Christians we remain holy by means of faithful continuance in the direction to which we have been called. Having been made holy by mean's of God's grace which was bestowed upon us in Christ Jesus, we walk in the pathway of holiness as we continue to "present [our] bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God" (Rom. 12:1).

Paul's instructions to Titus in our text are best appreciated as practical instruction for holy living. That this is true is seen especially in the opening lines of his instructions to older men. The words Paul uses in Titus 2:2 are translated by a variety of English words, depending on the translation you are using. However, in this instance the NIV seems to do the best job of capturing the meaning of the Greek words Paul used with its rendering "teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled." The meaning of holiness which emerges from the text is that of a mind set on practicing those things worthy of respect by means of a dedication to exercising self-control. The three areas in which Paul goes on to emphasize the need for self-control are "in faith, in love, and in endurance" (Titus 2:8ff). What one might expect older men to have attained already, Paul urges younger men to seek by means of sensible (thoughtful) conduct in all aspects of their lives (verses 6-8).

In his instructions to the women, Paul is much more specific than he is in his instructions to the men. However, in reading Paul's list of the kinds of conduct to be expected of women we should still remain aware of the fact that Paul's ultimate aim is to encourage women to be holy. Let me suggest at this point that it might be helpful to compare Paul's instructions here with those given by Peter, noting how Peter makes specific reference to the objective of being holy (1 Pet. 3:1-6).

I would like to point out here that the apostle Paul often made use of lists in his writings. In our handling of these lists we must be careful not to merely reduce their meaning to that of a shopping list to be checked off. Instead, we need to appreciate how Paul used these lists to convey an image. They are not necessarily to be thought of as exhaustive. Rather, they are suggestive (or illustrative) of the whole of what Paul is calling for in the context. In the case of Titus 2:1-8, this would include anything and everything God would require of His people in their pursuit of holiness.

In preparing this article I asked my mother, Zella Jarrett, to write some words of advice to younger women who are seeking to live holy lives in this present age. Mom's words, as you will see, come from the heart as she speaks from almost half a century of experience as a preacher's wife. She writes, "One of the greatest compliments I ever received came in a letter from a niece who wrote, 'When I was a teenager I used to get excited when I knew you were coming, because you were the only adult in my world I would talk to'."

For too long we have thought of Titus 2:3-5 as referring to classroom teaching only, but to me, teaching a younger person can involve just listening, the giving of a hug, an encouraging word, a smile, or the expression of interest in their goals and dreams. While structured classroom teaching has its place, we need more of this kind of instruction in the church.

My experiences are not unique to me, or just to preacher's wives. I know the tears and joys women go through in the church. The first time I saw an article by a woman in *Carolina Christian* I thought, "Why is she in a magazine like this?" So, with some reluctance I offer this mainly to encourage young girls. I want them to know that women are the glue that holds the church.

I came from what is now called a "dysfunctional" home and I decry all the fancy labels our society has placed upon us. One of my favorite expressions to decry is "the need to be validated." As Christian women, your validation comes from knowing that you serve a risen Lord who understands and cares for you and what you do, no matter how seemingly small or great it is. He is your judge, not man. Let your self-esteem soar in the knowledge that He cares for your soul like no other.

My counsel to young women, wives and mothers would be to hold onto your dreams and goals. Stay sweet, raise your children in the Lord as you allow them the space to learn and experience their own joys and sorrows. Always compliment first and encourage daily. To grandmothers I would say, love your grandchildren and encourage them, filling in all the blanks you couldn't do with your own children. An to all men and women I would offer this word–strive to be holy.

Paul Jarrett preaches for the Archdale church in Charlotte, NC. You may contact him at 1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210. You may write to his mother, Zella Jarrett, at PO Box 189, Racine, WV 25165.

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A Holy Purification

Terry Graves

WHAT SHOULD BE THE MOTIVATING force that causes a Christian to live a godly lifestyle? Can you identify such a force in your own life? The question of motivation is a key to meaningful life as a Christian. At this point, open your Bible with me and read Titus 2:11-14.

In the previous section of Paul's letter to Titus, the believer is exhorted to live a pure life "so that no one will malign the word of God" (2:5), "so that those who oppose [us] may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us" (2:8), and "so that in every way [we] will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive" (2:10). This section encourages Christians to be different, holy, pure, and filled with integrity. Our text explains why God's people should live as they are exhorted to in verses 2-10.

Here (2:11-14) the apostle expanded the meaning of "Savior" in verse 10 by explaining what was involved in this salvation we have through Jesus Christ. The emphasis here is on grace–God's lavish favor on undeserving sinners. Paul pointed out three wonderful ministries of the grace of God. Grace redeems us, grace reforms us, and grace rewards us.

First, let's note the relationship between God's grace and redemption. Paul writes, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). Let's remember what the grace of God is. Grace is God's undeserved favor and help which came by His unsolicited choice. The reason God intervened in the human situation is quite simply because He determined to give us what we did not deserve. The salvation of man was God's free choice; it was His initiative as by love and kindness He decided to offer it. We are what we are by the grace of God. Grace is truly God's riches at Christ's expense.

The grace of God that brings eternal salvation through Christ's death on the cross has appeared to all men. God so loved the world that Jesus tasted death for us all. This grace is available to all regardless of who we are and what we have done with our lives. And how was this saving grace revealed, or manifested? Jesus gave Himself (verse 14). We are saved by an act of generous, sacrificial love. Christ Himself has become the price paid to set us free from the guilt and destructive power of sin. It is grace that liberates us, not our achievements.

Second, let's look at the relationship between grace and purification. As Paul said, "Grace teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age." Further, Christ gave Himself "to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:12, 14b). Though it is available to all people, God's grace is operative only in the life of the person who responds to the message of redemption. God's people are those who have responded trustingly and obediently to Jesus Christ.

Salvation is not only a change in position (liberated *from* the guilt and penalty of sin), but also a change in attitude, appetite, ambition, and action. The same grace that redeems us also changes our lives and makes us godly. we are taught and disciplined by God's grace, trained to be the kind of people that glorify Him. Jesus didn't die on the cross simply to save us from sin and give us a home in heaven. He died to change us. He gave Himself for us so that we should no longer live for ourselves, bur for Him. He died to transform us from self-centered people into God-centered people. We are not our own; we were bought with a price. Thus, we belong to the Lord. He is the one who has dealt with our sin problem. By His death He seeks to come into our lives and make us into the men and women God wants us to become for His glory.

It is God who does the purifying with the purpose in view that we should be a very special people, uniquely His own. We are the people who give Him pleasure as He delights in us when we are "eager to do good." A person who has been truly converted to Jesus Christ and who understands clearly what it cost Christ to save him will respond to God's love. Such a person will allow himself or herself to be disciplined by the grace of God.

Grace teaches us to avoid ungodliness. And just what is ungodliness? Many people associate with this word heinous sins such as murder, stealing, and so on. Rather, ungodliness includes everything that a person does without taking God into account. An ungodly person focuses on himself. He doesn't acknowledge or recognize God. He is controlled by his fleshly passions. Ungodliness results in living only for the here and now. The grace of God teaches and disciplines us to avoid such a lifestyle. Christians say "no" to this kind of life.

Further, God's grace teaches us to live self-controlled and upright lives. We don't live for the gain and pleasure of the moment. We live instead with an eternal focus. We live lives that reflect the character of our Creator and Savior. We pursue a lifestyle that honors and pleases Him. While Christians must live in "this present age," we must not live like or for it.

Finally, we not the relationship between *God's grace and glorification.* We are to live pure lives during this age "while we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (verse 13). Before Jesus Christ returned to heaven, He promised that He would come again to take all of His people to be with Him (John 14:1-3). This is our blessed and glorious hope. As the apostle John put it, "Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). Future grace motivates us to live pure lives in the present. When our hearts are fixed on heaven we will have the right perspective on this life and we will pursue purity and Christlikeness.

A believer who has a truly Christian philosophy of life will be motivated by God's grace in serving Him. There is no way one can ignore such love. The Christian will be trained by His grace, doing everything within his power to conform his life to God's will while he waits for Christ to return.

Terry Graves preaches for the Shelby church of Christ. He may be reached at 845 W. Warren St., Shelby, NC 28150

A Holy Discipline

Phil Stapp

DISCIPLINE IS IMPORTANT FOR A family. Not just punishment, but that standard within which the members of the family function and exist together. Healthy family discipline includes teaching, training, communication, togetherness, punishment and many other aspects that enable a family to function and live together in unity. What a joy it is to see families that are loving, happy and close. It is God's desire and design for every family.

God hates anything that destroys family unity (such as divorce and violence, Mal. 3:16, and stubborn and rebellious children, Deut. 21:18-21). Family unity is important to him, whether it is our physical family or his spiritual one. The unity of God's family is **the** major theme of the New Testament. Yet it was a major problem in the early church and continues to be so today.

The Christians on Crete were having a great deal of difficulty with family unity. These were people who were known as liars, evil brutes and lazy gluttons (Titus 1:12). In other words, they were used to worrying only about themselves because they were motivated by selfish desire. Titus is left in Crete by Paul to "straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town" (1:5). The main thing left unfinished were the teaching and training necessary for them to get along as a loving family; this is one reason why it was important for them to have elders who would be good examples.

Paul is concerned about the future of these Christians because "they claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good" (1:16). So what can be done? Paul instructs Titus to develop family discipline. This discipline includes: having elders to be examples and shepherd the flock; Titus teaching various groups how to live and treat each other; punishing those who would tear up the family.

It is in addressing this last form of discipline that Paul writes, "But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned (3:9-11)."

Sports fans often hear of very talented players being traded. But why are players with great ability are traded? Why wouldn't any team want these special players? It usually stems from the fact that they are not team players or are trouble makers.

Paul understood what Christians who are selfish or argumentative could do to the unity of the family of God. He also understood that division could begin with "foolish controversies" and "arguments about the law." These may seem essential to some, even points of fellowship. Inevitably, however, they do not build unity but destroy it. That is why Paul tells Titus to avoid such things because they are of no benefit to anyone.

Titus is not only to avoid these useless and divisive arguments himself, he is to discipline any who persist in being involved in them. The discipline includes cutting them off from the family that they are harming, so that they may no longer do so. Paul reminds Titus that this is a discipline they have brought upon themselves because they are warped, sinful and self-condemned.

This discipline has two purposes. First, it removes the trouble maker from the family so that no further damage can be done and healing can take place. Second, it points out to the trouble maker that the family is more important than selfish desires. These may seem like drastic measures. But Paul is reminding us just how seriously God takes his family and its well being. If God takes it this seriously, how can we do any less?

I have two sons, one ten and one five. They fight and argue over silly things as brothers will do. I spend a lot of time trying to impress upon them that it does not matter who wins the arguments or fights. What matters is that you are brothers and you love each other. They do not always understand. I pray that they will someday. It is sad to me, however, that there are Christians who act more like children than children of God. We must never forget that being loving brothers and sisters is more important than selfish desires or winning arguments.

As the family of God we must develop a discipline that teaches, matures and draws us together. What a joy it is to see the family of God loving, happy, and close, enjoying the life that they share in Jesus Christ. This is the way God designed his family to be.

Phil Stapp preaches for the Brewer Rd. church in Winston-Salem, NC. You may contact him at 2010 Brewer Rd., Winston-Salem, NC 27127.

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Barry Bentley is a young man who has devoted his ministry thus far to mission work in Papua New Guinea. Barry's work is sponsored by the Wilkesboro church in Wilkesboro, NC. The following article is taken from his newsletter and serves as a touching reminder of the life-changing power of the gospel of Christ.

Yokol's Story

Barry Bentley

HE WAS A THIEF, A HEAVY POT-smoker and a trouble maker in general. His friends attended the church here in Kama. He was always too busy sleeping off the night before to come with them to worship God.

Then, he got sick. An undiagnosed illness whittled him down to nearly nothing. He was a shell of his former healthy self. Yokol eventually recovered, but not entirely. He was strong again physically, but his mind was troubled. The stories that his friends told him about the church and the youth group meetings had peaked his interest and he knew that something big was missing from his life.

Finally, Yokol attended a youth group meeting. I do not remember the topic at the time, but at the end of the meeting I shared the good news of Christ and stated that this good news should compel us to repentance and obedience. He attended a couple more youth meetings and then began to come on Sunday mornings, too. On his third Sunday Yokol gave his life to Christ, confessed Him and then put Him on in baptism. Yokol's new life began.

Weeks later his body fell ill once more. We prayed with him and for him, and once again Yokol returned to health. I would ride a motorcycle on a daily basis to the middle of the coffee plantation where he lived. We would discuss life and God and joke about that beat-up old Honda that took me around to visit. Yokol's life was different now that he was a Christian and he delighted in taking part in the youth devotionals. My two-year-old son loved to spend time with him, and Yokol always had time to spend with little David.

In December Shawn Harmon, Sheri and I went to Port Moseby to see Sheri and David off on their return flight to the U.S. With heavy holiday air schedules, Shawn and I didn't get back to Goroka until after Christmas. When we got home we found out that Yokol was sick again. This time it was worse than before. On Saturday Shawn drove him to the hospital, where he was admitted and diagnosed with a very general anemia.

On Monday Yokol had a dream which his father related to me on the following Saturday. According to his father, Yokol said, "I dreamt Nelson (Yokol's best friend) and I went to the water. We had built a stand in a tree by the water and I went on top of it. Nearby I could see Barry. He was praying. A rope came down from above. I waved to Nelson and Barry, took the rope and was taken up."

On Tuesday I went to visit Yokol. He saw me, but the doctors and nurses were busy with him and we had no chance to talk or pray together. I promised to return on Thursday. Thursday morning was a busy time, too. We didn't stay, but returned at one o'clock. Yokol's breathing was labored, his body swollen and his skin pale. He didn't speak. I talked to him a little, and then we prayed. We prayed that even though we wanted Yokol here with us, we were confident of Yokol's eternity and that if it was his time, we would be happy for him to leave us. He spoke one word, "Amen." He motioned for Nelson to go and that he was going to sleep. We left the hospital and at two o'clock Yokol went to be with the Lord.

The next days I spent studying with the family. As we discussed Yokol's life on Saturday, his father then related the story of Yokol's dream to me. Through Yokol's faith and his confidence in the grace of Christ even for the worst of sinners, he has taught the church, the community and his family a lot about the peace there is in facing eternity as a Christian.

A week after Yokol's spirit left his body, we planted the body on a hill between a stand

(Conhtinued on page 15)

Church Spotlight: Bamberg

Borden J. Baker

THE BAMBERG CHURCH OF CHRIST was established in 1962 and flourished in the beginning. The congregation reached its zenith in the 1970's, but a pattern of decline began in the early 1980's until the church bottomed out in 1987. By that time, there was only one remaining member.

The elders of the St. Andrews Road church in Columbia were informed of the condition of the church in Bamberg and were asked to undertake a rejuvenation of the church. They accepted the challenge in August, 1987. Also agreeing to help in this effort were the churches in Barnwell and St. George as each assigned families to attend the Sunday morning worship services in Bamberg. This arrangement remained in effect until March, 1988. At this time brother Ralph Jones of the St. Andrews Road church began working with the church in Bamberg on a regular basis. Services were conducted only on Sunday morning until May of 1988, when evening services commenced.

Brother Jones began a program of visitation and in-home Bible studies in addition to making visits to inactive members. As a result, seven former members agreed to return, providing the church with a nucleus upon which to build. The Bible studies produced five baptisms and a family of four moved into the community and began worshipping with the church. The church was back on the road toward recovery.

Brother Harvey Allen and his wife Gail began working with the church in February, 1989. Although employed in secular work full-time, brother Allen was diligent in his preaching and other ministry efforts until about September, 1989. Shortly thereafter he and his family moved to North Carolina.

The church was without a full-time preacher until June 1, 1991. That is when brother Coy and sister Eve Crosby began their work with Bamberg. Brother Crosby is retired from the United States Army and both he and Eve are native South Carolinians. Since their coming to Bamberg, the church has grown significantly, particularly in the past year.

The year of 1995 was a busy one for the church. A weekly thirty minute radio program featuring Mack Lyon of Edmond, OK, was begun. A "Know Your Bible" Bible correspondence campaign was conducted with encouraging results. A gospel meeting and campaign in July was a highlight of the year. Brother Neil Myers and fourteen others helped with the campaign and meeting. Extra phone lines were installed and a majority of the persons living in Bamberg and Bamberg County were called, invited to church, and offered John Hurt's eight lesson Bible correspondence course.

The Bible correspondence ministry has been one of the most exciting carried out by the church. Currently there are more than 1,100 who are enrolled in the program.

Perhaps the most significant ministry of the church is the prison ministry at Allendale Correctional Institute in Fairfax, SC. Approximately 200 inmates there are enrolled in the "Know Your Bible" campaign. One has been baptized as a result of the courses and six others have expressed a desire to obey the gospel. On January 21, 1996, brothers and sisters from Bamberg, New Ellenton, and Williston, SC, went to the prison for an evening worship service with the inmates. At the conclusion of the two hour service nine inmates came forward, made the good confession of Christ, and were baptized into the Lord. And now there is the opportunity for another prison ministry in Estill, SC.

Goals have been set for 1996. The church will seek to provide monthly support for one of the orphans' homes administered by our brethren. They will also contribute monthly to the church in Edmond, OK, in order to assist them in the production of the "In Search of the Lord's Way" radio program. This is a program that the Edmond church provides free of charge to those who request it. Great emphasis will continue to be given to the Bible correspondence program and the prison ministries.

The Bamberg church is evidence that small churches can do big things in the kingdom of

God. The church further demonstrates that there is hope for small churches, no matter how bleak things may appear to be. Once near death, the Lord was able to breathe new life into the church through the use of faithful people who were willing to be used of Him.

* * *

Yokel's Story...continued from page 13

of wild poinsettias and under the shade of giant bamboo trees. The hill overlooks the nearby gardens and the Bena Bena mountain range. Yokol was my friend and I was privileged to preach his funeral. It was truly joyful to preach from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and James 4:13-17 with the confidence that the words are truth. Then we covered the hole with dirt and went home. This is Yokol's story.

That was yesterday. Please pray that others will have the faith that Yokol did and that they will se the urgency as he did. Thousands go into eternity everyday without the assurance that Yokol knew.

* * *

Those Who Differ...continued from page 18

that it displays an ugly and unchristian attitude and disposition is.

All this has led us to the conclusion that we simply do not know how to be honest, kind, considerate, and brotherly toward those who differ with us on anything, regardless of whether it is in matters of faith or opinion. It is this unchristian and devilish attitude that needs to be corrected among us, and if it is not it will mean the death of the church as we know it...there is simply no place for "uglyism" in the Lord's church.

It is our staunch and unmovable judgment that we ought to show a Christian attitude and disposition toward **all**, even to those who may be lost for embracing false teaching...if we cannot have a Christian attitude toward those who differ with us, then we simply cannot be Christians.

Learning From the Past

Burl Curtis

THERE IS A STRIKING SIMILARITY between God's people in the promised land and the church in the United States today. These likenesses are vivid and sometimes frightening. As has often been said, "Those who ignore history are destined to repeat the mistakes of the past." God is looking to bless those who will learn from the past and closely follow His will when others do not. Of such is the kingdom, the church.

Deuteronomy is a great sermon delivered by Moses. "These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side of Jordan in the wilderness" (Deut. 1:1). In chapters six and eight Moses warned Israel against forgetting God when the people entered the promised land. They were to "fear the Lord and keep all his statutes and commandments" (Deut. 6:2). If they did, many great blessings were promised to them by God. Their days would be prolonged, they would increase mightily, they would be given great and goodly cities which they had not built. Further, they would have houses full of good things which they did not fill, wells they did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which they had not planted. The land God was giving them was flowing with milk and honey. It was a "good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass" (Deut. 8:7-9). In other words, they would prosper wonderfully. Surely we would recognize that the great blessings we enjoy in this country come from the hand of God as well. There is an abundance of wealth and prosperity in this country and it is shared by Christians. Today we meet in fine church houses built by others, we farm land we did not clear, we live in cities we did not build and work at jobs we did not create. We are educated in colleges and schools that others labored to build. It pleased the Lord to bless His people in the land of Canaan and it has pleased Him to bless His people in the United States today. The problem is that prosperity often leads to ingratitude and a false sense of security. As we know, Israel often fell into the trap of thinking that when things were good, God was not needed. Prosperity can blind us to our real needs. The same thing can happen with the church. In good times will we continue to remember the Lord and will we keep all His commandments?

Moses had a strong warning for God's people who were headed for prosperity. He said, "When thou shalt have eaten and be full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Deut. 6:11-12). Then he added, "Beware that thou forget not his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes which I command thee this day; lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Deut. 8:11-14). Finally, he offered these strong words, "And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth...And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God and walk after other gods and serve them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the Lord destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord your God" (Deut. 8:17-20).

These words are both comforting and disturbing. They are comforting to those families in the church who, after two or three generations or more, still humbly fear God and keep His will. On the other hand, they are disturbing to those families who have already begun to say in their hearts (whether they admit it or not), "Our power and the might of our hands have gotten us this wealth." They may not see their pride, but they have already forgotten the Lord by "not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes." They use their wealth and blessings for what they want, not for the work of the Lord. Try as they may to hold onto the church, they will not long remain in it.

God always blesses His people. Sometimes those blessings are in the form of prosperity, though financial blessings do not always accompany the greater spiritual blessings. The question is, will we learn from the mistakes and failures of the past, or will we perish as the nations which the Lord destroyed before Israel's face?

Burl Curtis served as editor of **Carolina Christian** *from 1959-1971. He may be contacted at 118 Red Oak Lane in Searcy, AR 72143.*

Answer to last month's riddle, "Who Am I?": The Whale

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Carolina Christian Classic Reprint

Those Who Differ

Howard Winters

THE CRUCIAL THING IN OUR CURRENT problems in the church in the Carolinas is not the fact that we differ in some matters, but that we often show an ugly and unchristian attitude and disposition in our differences. Differences are really not what bothers us. We do not suppose there are any two people on earth who agree on everything. We have never seen anyone with whom we agree one hundred percent and we have never encountered anyone who agrees with us in every detail. Our plea to restore the ancient order of things does not require precise agreement in all matters of opinion, expediency, or judgment. It only requires that we agree in matters specifically taught in the word of God.

For example, before moving to the Carolinas we preached in a certain city. We had built a new building and had gone to considerable labor and expense to install a baptistry. One Sunday night two young ladies came forward and requested baptism for the remission of sins, but they informed us that they did not want to be baptized in the baptistry. They said they believed baptism should be in running water because that is the way Jesus did it. We differed with them but happily took them to a nearby river and filled their request, even though it was most inconvenient. The problem here, as with most of our differences, was in the fact that they had confused the command to be baptized in water (regardless of where that water might be) with a matter of expediency pertaining to the water, and they had bound that expediency on their conscience as if it were the word of God. But their binding of an expediency on themselves did not prevent them from obeying the Lord's command. We could baptize them Scripturally while differing with them as to the status of the water in which they were to be baptized. we agreed on what Jesus specifically taught (baptism in water) but differed over a matter of expediency (where that water was to be).

So it is not the differences among us in these areas that disturb us: it is our attitude and disposition toward those with whom we differ. We have had occasions (especially as pertaining to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Christian's right to serve as an agent for his government, even in time of war, and the status of a remarried divorcee) to differ with many great, good, and sincere brethren. Some (and here we could name some of the greatest people God has on this earth) have differed with us in a friendly, brotherly, Christian manner. And we have worked together in as much harmony as we worked with the two young ladies whom we baptized in running water than in a warm convenient baptistry. Love, appreciation, and fellowship were not diminished in the least. In fact, we admired each other for standing true to his convictions. We believe this is the way it should be, but unfortunately this has not always been the case.

Some who have differed with others have been downright ugly about the matter–a thing that is far more foreign to Christianity than false beliefs in matters non-essential. This "uglyism" has been expressed by the withdrawal of fellowship, by brotherhood-wide campaigns to brand and mark some as false teachers, by spreading misinformation, by regarding some sincere Christians as no longer faithful to Christ or sound in the truth, by urging churches or colleges not to use certain ones in meetings or on lectureships, by refusing to attend lectureships where some speak, by turning their backs rather than be seen speaking to some in public, etc. We know one group who were terribly embarrassed because a well-known preacher attended their services. The took the words of Jesus and literally applied them to him while he was among them: "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man" (Matt. 18:17)...or worse! The fact that this has happened to certain ones is not the point; the fact

(Continued on page 15)

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VOL. 38 NO. 4 APRIL 1996

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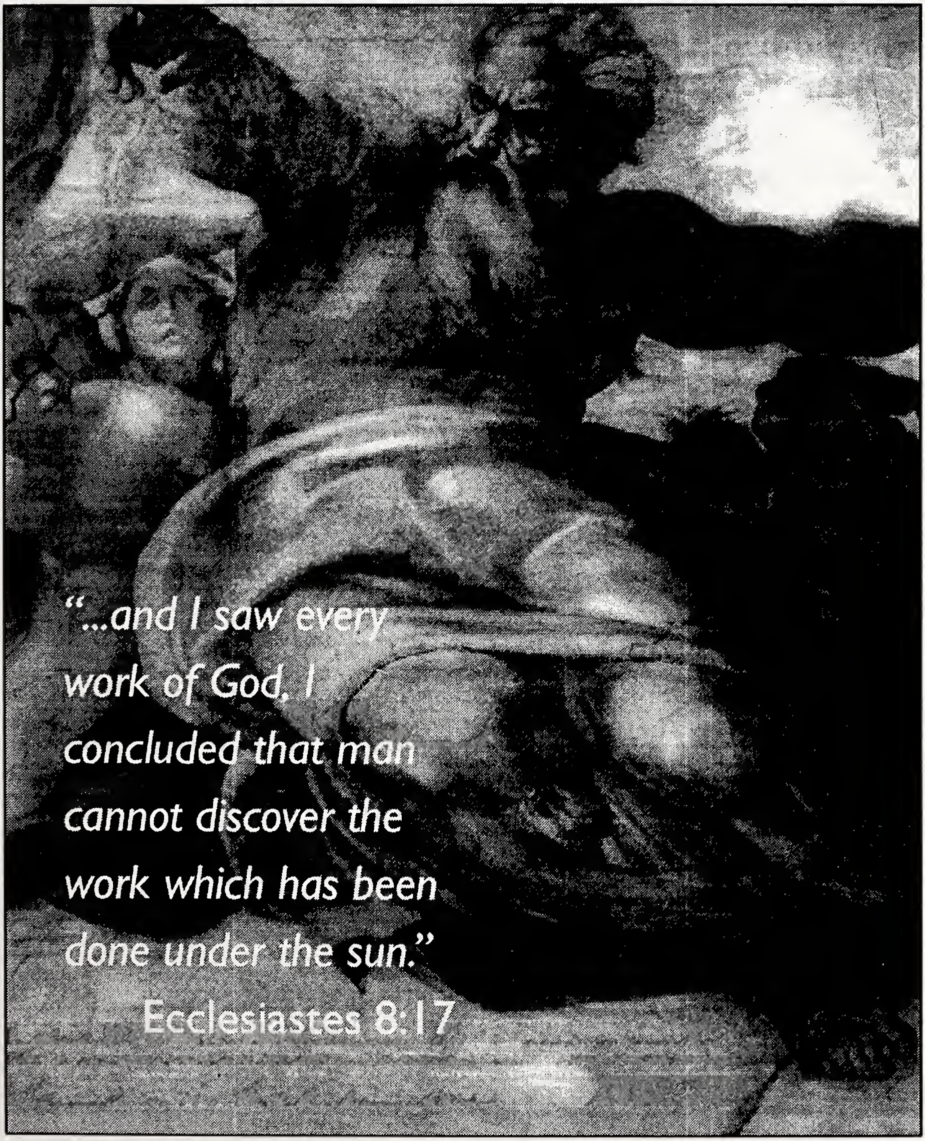

"...and I saw every work of God, I concluded that man cannot discover the work which has been done under the sun."
Ecclesiastes 8:17

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
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Dennis Conner, Editor
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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Rd., Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: Individual+$10/year ($19/2 years and $27/3 years); club of five or more+$9 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles+60¢/copy/month; church mailing list (minimum 15) 75¢/copy/month.
Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.
CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes
with Form 3579 to:

Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739
Address editorial matter to:
Dennis Conner
PO Box 1369
Yadkinville, NC 27055-1369
Address news items to:
Michael Mobley
301 Reed Creek Rd.
Mooresville, NC 28115

Address commercial advertising inquiries to:
Jacobs List, Inc.
PO Box 120
Clinton, SC 29325

Address all advertising pertaining to the churches of Christ or its members (including related organization) to the editor.

All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceding month.

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Editorial:

The Mystery of Life

DENNIS CONNER

As a preacher it is often my experience that people come to me with some very difficult questions about life; they come expecting me to have an answer for them. And I do. More often than not, my answer is "I don't know." I have learned that folks will appreciate that kind of honesty much more than they will some contrived, but inadequate, attempt to explain the hard questions of life (and death).

From our human perspective there are many difficulties, many seeming contradictions, that we might observe about life. Solomon notes some of them in the book of Ecclesiastes. He observes that a just man, a righteous man, dies young while there is a wicked man who is able to survive in spite of his wickedness (Eccl. 7:15). Where is the justice in that? Then he sees that there are the righteous who suffer while the unrighteous seem to be rewarded (Eccl. 8:14). Earlier he had noted that there are those who are oppressed and suffer great injustice, and they have no comforter (Eccl. 4:1). These situations indeed raise some difficult questions. Wanting to know the answers, Solomon decided to apply himself to the pursuit of human wisdom and search out the answers, only to find that it couldn't be done. He writes in Ecclesiastes 7:23-24, "I said, 'I will be wise'; but it was far from me. As for that which is far off and exceedingly deep, who can find it out?" The mysteries of life cannot explained from the worldly perspective.

The fact is, there are few clear answers to the hard questions. So what do we do? Give in to despair? Throw up our hands in resignation? I think not. We reject despair as being contrary to the joy and peace we have in Christ. Then perhaps we should insist on a God who can be fully known by us; ascribe to Him certain limitations that make Him more accessible and understandable to us. We should reject that solution as well, for it robs God of His mystery. How can we stand in awe of a God who can be fully comprehended by the human mind? Rather, consider this advice: we must learn to take life as it comes and not insist on knowing everything about it. This is sound advice. Why? For a number of reasons, as Solomon well understood.

First, because *God is too deep*. He observes in Ecclesiastes 817, "Then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man labors to discover it, yet he will not find it; moreoever, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it." There is nothing shallow in saying, "We just can't understand the ways of the Lord. We just have to trust Him." Rather, it is an admission of the greatness and sovereignty of the God who is almighty. As God Himself said through His prophet Isaiah, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts," (Isa. 55:9).

Some might protest, "Well, that's not much of an answer." Indeed, to say we can't understand everything that God does, but that we should trust Him anyway is insufficient for some, but consider the alternative: what answers do we have without God? Yes, we must admit that it is sometimes hard to make sense out of life even though we believe in God, but just try to make sense of it without Him! Remove God from the picture (which is exactly what "life under the sun" is in Ecclesiastes), and life makes no sense at all.

The truly wise person understands that there is more going on in this world than meets the eye. "For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all: that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God," (Eccl. 9:1). In other words, God is in control! As long as I trust the sovereign power of God, whose greatness and power easily surpasses all human understanding, it is possible to accept life as it comes.

Second, Solomon reminds us that *death is the great equalizer*. Solomon shares his conviction that, "Everything occurs alike to all: One event happens to the righteous and the wicked; to the good, the clean and the unclean; to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good, so is the sinner; and he who takes an oath as he who fears an oath," (Eccl. 9:2-3). It really doesn't matter whether we understand all the mysteries of life or not, because we must all experience the ultimate mystery called death.

Solomon's point is that regardless of what a man has done with his life, he must still deal with death. He reminds us that we are not in total control of our existence. This truth makes many people uncomfortable, so they retreat to what someone has called the "soothing illusions" of life: power, pleasure, wealth, wisdom, work, etc. However, the emptiness and transparency of those illusions is exposed in the face of death and they offer no real comfort in the face of the hard questions.

So, do you have questions? Are there things that don't seem to make any sense to you? Well, understand that despair and the abandonment of faith are not viable options. Choose God and you have the ultimate answer. Choose life under the sun and all you have are questions.

OOPS!

You might have noticed that the announced *Carolina Christian Classic Reprint*, "Two Extremes" by Howard Winters was not the one that was in fact published. The one that did appear, "Those Who Differ," originally apapeared in the June, 1982 issue. We apologize for the mix-up. At first I had selected "Those Who Differ" for inclusion, then decided to use "Two Extremes" instead. I would like to blame the mistake on my secretary, but I don't have one. The computer could be blamed, but it only does what the operator tells it to. I thought I had deleted the original article and replaced it with the second. Yet, somehow, I had retained the first and deleted the second! Anyway, I suspect it is the only mistake I will make, so enjoy this one while you can! I believe that our readers still benefitted from the article that did appear.

Just in case you were wondering what brother Winters wrote in "Two Extremes," it does appear in this month's issue (it would be difficult to get too much of Howard's writings). Thanks for your patience and understanding.

SMALL CHURCH WORKSHOP

Once called "the best kept secret in the Carolinas," the Small Church Workshop hosted every year by the Yadkinville church in Yadkinville, NC, will celebrate its tenth anniversary this year. The dates are May 9-10 and this year's theme is "Centering in God: Biblical Spirituality in the Small Church."

Designed to address the needs and challenges that are peculiar to a small church, it never was our intention at the Yadkinville church for the workshop to be a secret. We have tried to get the word out and those who attend try to spread the word to others. Every year many say that it is the most helpful, encouraging, and positive events they atttend. The fellowship is strong and the spirit is uplifting. Still, the record attendance for the two day workshop is only 36. Frankly, with more than 180 congregations in the Carolinas with a Sunday morning attendance of 150 or less, we cannot understand why more church leaders do not take advantage of this unique opportunity. We are aware of only one other workshop of its kind in the country, and that is in Texas.

We encourage you to participate in the Small Church Workshop this year. We can just about guarantee that it will be worth the time and effort. It's a secret we don't want to keep.

Two Extremes

HOWARD WINTERS

All of us are infected, to one degree or another, with the incurable disease of extremities (swinging to the extremes). But fortunately for most the infection does not incapacitate+that is, it does not throw us so far out of balance that we cannot function properly. However, the past two decades have seen the development of two extremes in the church on fellowship that are neither practical, sensible, nor Scriptural. On the one hand is the liberal (some classical but for the most part just practically so) whose broadmindedness has drawn a circle so large that it includes those whom the Lord rejects; on the other hand, the radical conservative has dogmatically drawn his circle so small that he excludes nearly everyone+he rejects those whom the Lord accepts. If permitted to run their course, both extremes will totally destroy fellowship as the Scriptures teach it. And for some reason both remind us of an anecdote we once read.

It seems that one day Augustine (who possessed one of the greatest minds in the church during the three centuries following the apostolic age) was wandering along the beach lost in thought and meditating on the profound doctrine of the trinity when he came upon a boy playing in the sand. As Augustine observed his activity it became clear that he was making a small ditch and letting a trickle of sea water run into it. The great theologian asked him what he was doing. The boy replied, "I am emptying the ocean into my ditch." Augustine applied this to the subject of his meditation, saying, "I am trying to do the same thing as this child. I am seeking to exhaust with my reason the infinity of God and to collect it within the limits of my own reason." Perhaps he was, and perhaps this is a problem we all face; and it certainly is the problem of our two extremes.

When we think of that boy trying to drain the ocean into his small ditch, we are reminded both of the liberal and the radically conservative. The ocean is the revealed truth of God, delivered to us in His holy and inspired word. The boy is man, regardless of who he may be, who tries to channel truth through human resources. The ditch is one's self-composed channel of truth, whether it be creed, church, science, preacher or pauper. The radical conservative so limits the flow of God's truth that unless it runs through his ditch it cannot be accepted. Anyone who seeks truth apart from his channel (anyone who goes to the word of God for himself) is a heretic from whom fellowship must be withdrawn. With him there is no truth which does not flow through his little ditch. The liberal, however, is different; he denies that the ocean exists. He is thus left to fill his ditch from any source he may choose, collecting a bit of truth from science, a dab from history, a smidgen from theology, etc. Since there is no ocean (no absolute or propositional truth) anything may drain through his ditch and its contents is broad enough for all to drink from.

As for us, we have chosen to ignore the little ditches of men altogether and bask in the sweet and vast ocean of truth, letting that, and that alone, determine the bounds of our fellowship. We would like to serve as a catalyst for the liberal on the left and the radical conservative on the right+that is, we would like to see both abandon their extremes (their human ditches) and return to the Scriptures as the only basis for either inclusion or exclusion.

---

*Howard Winters served as editor of **Carolina Christian** from 1971-1988. The author of several books in addition to his hundreds of editorials and articles, Howard's first love was always God and His word. He went home to his Lord in May, 1988.*

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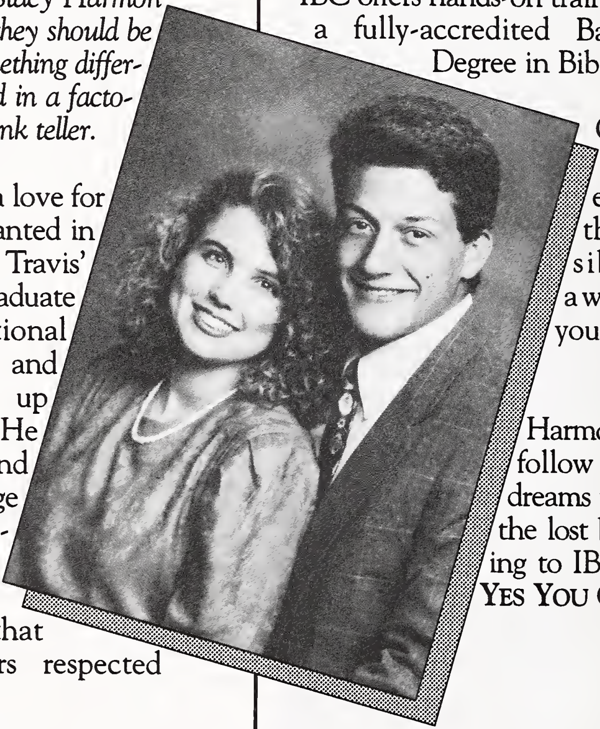

Travis and Stacy Harmon just knew they should be focused on something different. He worked in a factory, she was a bank teller.

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Law and Grace

JIM YARIN

Paul wrote to his brothers and sisters in Rome, "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!" (Rom. 6:15).

My otherwise happy mood vanished quickly one recent Saturday afternoon, just as soon as I saw the flashing red lights in my rear-view mirror. I followed the routine procedure of pulling over to the side of the road and producing my driver's license and car registration while struggling with the expected feelings of embarrassment. I was filled with consternation and dread over the impending fine. Although I hadn't been consciously aware of how fast I had been traveling, I wasn't about to disagree with the trooper when he said that I had been speeding. Imagine the relief I felt+and the conscious effort I subsequently made to watch my speed+when he issued me a "warning ticket." Whew! I was guilty as charged...but forgiven!

> "...Law functions in the area of regulation while grace functions in the area of forgiveness."

Some today are confused over the perceived conflict in the spiritual realm concerning the relationship between law and grace. Both are certainly biblical terms and both serve important functions; they are **not** contradictory to one another when properly understood. To illustrate, my car, which is suitable for cruising city streets and driving on highways, is otherwise ill-equipped and inadequate for off-road racing or transporting heavy equipment. That vehicle serves me well so long as my use of it is confined to the purpose for which it was designed. It was not designed to be a dragster, bulldozer, tank or truck.

Likewise, law functions well within the boundaries of its intended purposes. God used law as a tutorial device to bring men to Christ (Gal. 3:24-25). He used it in biblical times and uses it now as a regulatory instrument to deter human rebellion (I Tim. 1:8-11). Law also works as an educational tool to help sincere, law abiding people to know what God allows and what he prohibits.

However, law fails miserably when viewed as the basis for our justification (our acceptance with God). It is worthless because one violation of law effectively disqualifies one spiritually (James 2:10). Grace, on the other hand, was designed to bring about our acceptance by God. As Paul said, it is the grace of God "that brings salvation" (Titus 2:11). We must remember that law functions in the area of regulation while grace functions in the area of forgiveness.

There is a definite connection between grace and **law**less behavior, because grace leads us to properly appreciate what God has done for us, "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:12).

In the future I'll be a better driver for my experience that day. The speed limits are posted and monitored for my own+and others+protection. And while I "broke the law," I'll not soon forget that even state troopers can dispense grace!

Jim Yarian preaches for the St. Andrews Rd. church of Christ in Columbia, SC. He can be contacted at 425 St. Andrews Rd., Columbia, SC 29210.

Doing Time..........

Ken Forrest

If it is convenient for you, stop for just a moment and think about the past five years of your life. Does it seem possible that so many changes could have taken place in such a short time? It's probable that you have had one or more of the following changes to occur in your life during this time: a new home, a new occupation, additional pounds and inches, a birth into your family, a death of someone near to you, a marriage, a divorce, and on and on. No matter what changes have occurred, it is almost certain that you would not have anticipated them five years ago. If those changes seem remarkable, consider the past week's events. Did it hold within it the potential to redirect the next five years? Will there even be five more years? The point is this: we are woefully ill-equipped to control the events of our future.

> "All we need to know is that if we will trust Him, we will always be ready for tomorrow."

Biblical wisdom constantly reminds us of these uncertainties of life, especially as they are seen in the context of man's constant desire to write his own future. The wise man said, "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1). Can we so easily disregard this caution against presuming too much about the time to come? In this text we are certainly not being encouraged to avoid reasonable preparations for tomorrow, but we are being given a warning against the all too common practice or presuming upon tomorrow.

Our preparations for tomorrow must be founded in a submissive reverence for the will of our gracious heavenly Father. Jesus taught us not to worry about tomorrow since we have no personal control over its outcome (Matt. 6:34). What uncertain event is awaiting us as we foist our hopeful thoughts upon the future? And what advantage would there be to us if we were able to know it? Thankfully, God has wisely kept us in the dark and reserved to Himself such knowledge. We must, on the other hand, submit ourselves totally to the all-knowing God as He disciplines and trains us to be dependent upon Him. All that we need to know is that if we will trust Him, we will always be ready for tomorrow.

PRICE INCREASE

We regret to announce that we have no choice but the increase our subscription prices. It has been five years since the last price increase, but unfortunately we cannot say the same for the price of paper and printing. As you well know, costs continue to rise and that puts a lot of pressure on publications like ours. While we are a non-profit operation, we cannot carry on our ministry for long while prices related to publishing continue to steadily increase and our subscription rates remain the same. No one on the board claims any particular business prowess, but it doesn't take a genius to figure out that you can't spend more money than you take in and survive for very long (unless, of course, you happen to be a member of Congress).

Carolina Christian has a rich 38 year history, and we expect it to continue for another 38 years. Our readers have always responded well to price increases in the past and we do not expect it to be any different this time.

Effective immediately the yearly single subscription will be $10.00, the bundle rate will be .60 per copy (up from .50), the rate for a mailing list will be .75 per copy, and the club rate (5 subscriptions or more) will be $9.00. Even at these prices we believe that *Carolina Christian* is still a great bargain. Thanks in advance for all your support!

Personal Worship

Dora Conner

Lynne Hybels, in her book *The Joy of Personal Worship,* wrote, "Though I grew up in a Christian home, I never learned anything about true worship. In retrospect, I realize that I assumed that because I was a Christian, I was automatically a worshiper. In a sense, of course, that is true, for in identifying myself as a Christian, I acknowledged my allegiance and submission to the true God. I failed, however, to move from that vague and passive acknowledgment of God into a more clearly defined attitude of worship. I didn't view worship as a meaningful activity in which I should consciously engage. Throughout those years I was aware of a nagging anxiety and restlessness in my Christian life, but I was never able to determine the source of the problem. I was afraid that I was displeasing God, that I was concentrating on nonessentials, that I had somehow missed the key to Christian living. Only in the last two years have I learned that the key is worship."

Sometime ago in a congregational meeting we were asked to write a few lines on what the church where we meet has meant to us. For me, it has meant a spiritual awareness I previously lacked and a feeling of true worship when we assemble before the Lord. I feel a sense of His presence in the midst of the love and unity we share, but too often this sense of His presence is left at the church building. In our daily lives we tend to push God to second, third, or even fourth place. Our priorities for the most part are (1) our jobs, (2) our families, (3) then perhaps service to someone in need before we (4) take a little time to treat ourselves to some "personal this-is-for-me outing." Then, if we aren't too tired, we give God a few minutes. And we wonder why we feel such an emptiness in our lives and such dissatisfaction with the world about us? Even though we can make a long list of things we have done as servants, we still feel a yearning for something that is missing in our daily lives. Could it be that what is missing is the sense of His presence?

I believe it is essential that we become involved in personal daily worship as we purposefully concentrate on the holiness of God. What I am talking about is worship; a godly "take the time to smell the roses," if you will. It would serve us all well to take time to focus on the qualities of the awesome God who is worthy of our praise. He is the Creator of the world and all that is in it (Isa. 40:26-31). He is the everlasting God who has always been and always will be (Isa. 63:16; Ps. 90:2; I Chron. 16:36). Try contemplating that truth! He is the all-powerful God (Ps. 115:3) who is everywhere at all times (Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 7:48-50). He sees all, knows all, all the time. Awesome God. Indeed, He is worthy of honor and praise and adoration. He is worthy of our worship as the holy God. *Holy.* This is a word that calls forth awe and reverence and adoration.

At this point I would like to offer some suggestions for developing a practice of personal worship. First, there must be a commitment to worship. That is, we must be willing to make time each day for a period of study, praise and prayer. That will mean rearranging the order of our daily priorities. Admittedly, that can be difficult, as I can personally attest. My priorities have been pretty much the same for forty years or more. However, I yearn for the peace that passes all understanding and I firmly believe I can find that peace only when I have made it a priority to take time to be alone with God. I believe that by taking the time each day to focus on Him I can find a sense of God's presence that will enable me to worship and serve Him more effectively.

Another suggestion would be to make great use of the Psalms to set the mood for your personal worship. The Psalms are filled with prayers, genuine feelings of those who are trying to understand Him and the way He works, and with both personal and corporate expressions of worship. They are filled with God. It would be hard to think of a better place to begin.

As a third suggestion, keep a journal during your personal worship time. This really requires commitment and discipline, but is well worth the effort. Write down important lessons you learn from your study. Make notes on things for which you would like to give God praise. Keep track of prayers offered and answered.

Deriving from the worship of God is service to God. Personal worship helps to transform service. Oftentimes we let our busy schedules nibble away at us until there is no joy left in serving. I cannot believe this is the way God meant for His servants to be: wake up early and rush around to get ready for work; rush to get this project and that typing done before I leave my desk for lunch; while out for lunch I'll get my car serviced; when I get home I'll throw a load of clothes in the washer while I'm cooking supper, and then+oh, dear! I just remembered. Laura came home from the hospital today. I'll have to run out to the grocery store and get something to cook so I can take it to her on my way to work in the morning. She probably won't feel up having me spend any time with her, anyway. And on and on it goes till we drop into bed at night so weary we can't even get through the mandatory nightly prayer before conking out. *Does this bring joy?* I don't think so. Not to you, not to me, nor to our Father!

"FIRST, WE MUST MAKE A COMMITMENT TO WORSHIP."

It won't be easy, but we must strive toward centering out thoughts on God before all else. Set the alarm ten minutes early so you can have a few minutes alone with Him. Write down your thoughts about God+who He is, what He has done for you, what He expects. Meditate. When you are having a hard time, when the problems of daily life get to you and you're angry or bitter, meditate on a passage of Scripture that has become meaningful to you. Focus on the beauty and goodness of life in Christ. What you will find is that personal worship will change you, your attitudes toward serving, and your attitudes toward living.

So, let's begin rearranging our priorities so that we can give to God the worship He deserves and expects, and He in turn will help us as we spread our love and our service throughout our communities, touching the lives of those who so desperately need Him. From a sermon I heard once on the book of James I made this note: "Is my faith real? If so, as God's instrument I must make a difference." Taking time for private and personal worship can help us to make a difference.

Dora Conner owns and operates Carolina Christian Bookstore. This article is from a message she shared with the ladies of the Yadkinville church of Christ. You may contact her at 6101 Holder Rd., Clemmons, NC 27012. Or you can tell her how much you enjoyed this article while ordering a book from Carolina Christian Bookstore!

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Boring Worship

Burl Curtis

More and more the complaint "worship is boring" is being heard and that the answer is to change our public worship. It is my belief that true boredom and true worship are opposites. How can one be bored while genuinely ascribing worth to God, reverencing Him and giving Him our devotion? If I am bored, am I really worshipping? It is like saying white is black or sad is the same as happy. These by nature are opposites, and so it is with boredom and worship. How do we explain the feeling that worship is boring?

Some who make this complaint may see themselves as spectators rather than participants. To attend worship and then come away saying, "It was boring," may reveal that the one making the statement either did a very poor job of worshipping or failed to worship at all. Or it may reveal an attitude in which one went to worship expecting in some way to be entertained, but was not.

> "Each group of assembling believers has the responsibility to offer to God the best in worship they are capable of giving."

When God's people meet to sing, pray, observe the Lord's Supper, give gifts to God, and hear the Bible read and explained, only for some to come away feeling bored, whose fault is it? It could very well be that the preacher was not prepared or the song leader did not give much thought to his responsibility, but could someone else also be to blame? How boring is your private worship? Do you ever finish worshipping God in private and then say, "That was boring"? Worship by its very nature is not boring. If you find that you are bored with public worship, likely your private worship is also boring, or you don't even worship privately. The problem is often not with the worship, but the individual.

Each group of assembling believers has the responsibility to offer to God the best in worship they are capable of giving. Individuals in the group will vary in their ability to properly worship and worship leaders will have differing skills. We may think that having the best trained people possible in leading roles would help, but that could possibly lead to less tolerance for those with lesser abilities. Having the best skills does not cure boredom in worship, but a change of heart will.

Jesus gives a brief and complete solution. He said, "But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). Worshipping in spirit will destroy boredom. To worship in truth will keep the church from neglecting those things God says He wants in public worship while not adding things He does not want, nor binding something that is a personal preference only. Worshipping without truth may certainly cure one's boredom, but it could also condemn one's soul.

Since all worship is from the heart of the individual to the heart of God, no one can worship for me just as no one can believe for me. Each person is responsible for his own worship. Just because a person is in the assembly of the Lord's church does not mean that he is automatically giving true worship to God. True worship is more than going through the motions. True worship comes from the heart. If we are complacent about worship and bored with it, we need to hear what Jesus said to the lukewarm church in Laodecia, "Be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3:19).

Burl Curtis may be contacted at 118 Red Oak Lane in Searcy, AR 72143.

His Death and Ours……

DENNIS CONNER

In his book Death: the Riddle and the Mystery, Eberhard Jungel writes, "To ask about death is to enquire about life. In enquiring about death, theology questions the life which is indebted to the death of Jesus Christ. To what extent does the death of Jesus Christ determine the life of the Christian? And of what significance is the death of Jesus for the death which we all must die?" Jungel sees the issues of life and death as being inseparable issues; one cannot consider one without also considering the other. Further, he raises some important and fundamental questions about the impact of the death of Christ upon both the life and death of the believer. What impact does the death of Jesus have on the way I live? And what is the significance of the death of Christ for my own eventual and certain death? These are two of the most critical questions that lie at the heart of Christian experience. A biblical text that helps us to answer them is Hebrews 2:9, 14-15, in which we find that the death of Jesus is of decisive significance for the Christian's attitude toward death.

> "Jesus has met death on its own terms and beaten it."

Leading up to this text the writer quotes from Psalm 8:6, "You have put all things in subjection under his feet," (Heb. 2:8). However, we have not yet seen all the world actually made subject to Christ. But we do see Jesus "who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone," (Heb. 2:9). In other words, while it may not appear to us that everything has been brought under Christ's control, we still have the assurance that by the grace of God man's most fearful enemy, death, has been brought under subjection to Christ. Christ now has power over that death which had us in its power. And how was this done? "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

The writer assures his readers that Christ has shared fully in the human experience. Jesus has done more than just walk in our shoes; He has lived in our skin. He did more than just disguise Himself. Much more than that, He took on our nature. Flesh. Blood. Humanness, all the way from the manger in Bethlehem to the cross on Golgotha. There was nothing at all illusionary about His life, or His death.

In sharing our experience Jesus had two objectives in mind, and accomplished them both decisively. First, through Jesus' death, he who had the power of death, the devil, is rendered powerless. Before the cross Satan held mankind in an unyielding deathgrip. Man was powerless to deliver himself once sin had entered his life. Then entered Jesus. In His own death (and the cross always assumes the empty tomb), Jesus invaded the realm of the devil, released man from the cold grip of death, and thus destroyed the devil. Do you remember Jesus standing before the tomb of Lazarus? The Lord's friend had succumbed to the power of Satan. Standing outside the tomb Jesus stood, in a sense, on Satan's turf. Then He called out, "Lazarus, come forth!" And when Christ spoke not even death itself cold disobey. Lazarus came forth and the stench of death gave way to the celebration of life and hope. Then, when Jesus Himself died and was called forth from the grave by His Father, the power of Satan through death was once and for all destroyed.

Further, the day is coming when the devil and all his dark angels will be totally and eternally destroyed.

Second, Jesus' death brought release from the fear of death. Of all the fears that plague us, none is more paralyzing than the fear of death. We curse death, avoid the thought of it and try to cheat it in a thousand useless ways, but no matter what we do the fear remains. The Christian, however, has nothing to fear. Death itself has died. Jesus has met death on its own terms and beaten it. Thus, there is no longer anything for us to fear. We are free indeed. We have been liberated from death's curse and are no longer imprisoned by the fear of its approach.

Now, to return to the questions raised by Jungel. To what extent does the death of Jesus determine the life of the believer? The answer provided by this text is that it was by grace that Jesus tasted death for me. Therefore, I am indebted, and motivated, to live only for Him. Further, we may live with the assurance that He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world. And what is the significance of Jesus' death for our own deaths? The fear is taken away. We may speak of it freely, and even welcome it.

For those outside of Christ death is feared because of its finality and its mystery. For the Christian, however, both of those factors are rendered meaningless. Because Christ died (and rose again) we know that death is not the final human experience; it is but a bridge to another aspect of that experience. And as for the element of mystery, we know what lies beyond...heaven!

Life and death. They are seemingly contradictory, yet inseparable, realities. They are interwoven into the fabric of human existence. In life we may try to avoid the thought of our morality, but death will still come for us, and the way we die will depend largely on how we have lived. To find meaning and significance in either one will depend on what we do with the death of Christ.

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I Believe in Carolina Bible Camp

ROB ALBRIGHT

June 9 through July 30 this year will be the 41st encampment of Carolina Bible Camp. God has blessed CBC with a tremendous facility and each year there are a number of wonderful people who give of themselves to serve as director, teachers, counselors, cooks, nurses, lifeguards, and more. These are people who possess a servant mind in helping our young people to be drawn closer to Christ. This kind of support will pay dividends for the kingdom of God for years and generations to come.

I am just one of many who believe in CBC because of what it has to offer the young people of the Carolinas. The daily Bible teaching, worship, and devotionals serve to develop the mind of Christ in our youth. Every young camper is living in a challenging time, but at CBC they are reminded to remember God while they are still young (Eccl. 12:1). While at camp some will become Christians and commit themselves to the Christian life, going on to be active and faithful in the Lord's work in their home congregations. For others it will be a time of renewal and strengthening in their commitment. No, growing up in this modern society is not easy, so the Christian fellowship CBC affords is a big plus in the development of Christian attitudes and behavior.

Another one of the benefits of camp is that it is a place where lasting friendships are made. I know that my own life has been blessed by the fellowship and friendship I find at camp. And of course, the greatest thing that happened to me at camp (not CBC, but it was at a good Bible camp) was meeting my future wife, Sharon. I wonder how many others have met their life mate at camp?

Yes, I believe in Carolina Bible Camp! CBC provides an atmosphere for spiritual and social growth that is unparalleled. It is a wonderful place to develop the mind of Christ, to receive guidance for the challenges of life, and to be challenged to grow in service to our Creator. See you at CBC!

Rob Albright preaches for the church in Thomasville, NC and devotes one week every summer to working at CBC. You may contact him at 612 Lakeview Dr., Thomasville, NC 27360. If you would like to know more about attending CBC this summer as either a camper or staff person, write to Wilson Burton at 142 Mary Circle, Concord, NC

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A Lesson in Stone Throwing

Paul Jarrett

The last few months had been filled with stress for me and my family. We couldn't afford it, but we really needed the weekend at Myrtle Beach we had planned. I knew in the back of my mind that the money we were going to spend on this trip might be better used to pay some bills. If I were being totally honest, I would have to admit that the money owed on the credit card I was using to help finance this trip was a major contributor to the stress I was feeling. However, right now we just needed to get away, even if it meant feeling guilty later about spending money we did not have.

> *"The one thing this experience did teach me was to refrain from throwing stones at people..."*

On the way home from the office I stopped at a convenience store to fill the car's gas tank for the trip. I also picked up some snacks to eat in the car on the drive to the beach. As I waited to charge my purchases to my credit card, I saw him. He was one of the homeless men from the uptown shelter. With the approach of winter the shelter's presence seemed to be attracting more and more of these unkempt men.

I started to turn my gaze away, lest he ask me for some money, when I noticed what he was doing. He was selecting a bottle of cheap whiskey to buy. I thought to myself that his actions proved what I had often said about the homeless. It had long been my contention that the homeless were mostly alcoholics and shiftless bums, unwilling or unable because of their undisciplined lifestyle to hold down a job.

I can't explain the next thought that came to my mind, but whatever the source I suddenly found myself identifying with this homeless man. It struck me like a thunderbolt that he might be buying that cheap whiskey he could not afford for the same reason I was leaving on a weekend trip to the beach I could not afford. In his case and mine we were both in our own way trying to escape from the stress of daily life. While my choice of a vacation at Myrtle Beach was more respectable than his choice of a two dollar whiskey, who was I to cast stones? If our situations were reversed, perhaps he would have chosen the trip to the beach and I would be the one buying cheap whiskey. In either case the relief from the stress which our choices had brought would only be temporary, and in the long run would only lead to more stress.

I wish I could say the insight I gained at that moment resulted in a total turn around in how I live my life. Unfortunately, honesty compels me to admit that I still find myself occasionally spending money I do not have the in order to escape the stresses of life. The one thing this experience did teach me was to refrain from throwing stones at people whose circumstances and stories I did not know. Instead, I have found that a good release from my own stress is found in helping those in less fortunate, but similar, circumstances. I also hope it helps them with their stress.

Paul Jarrett preaches for the Archdale church of Christ in Charlotte, NC. This article is taken from the Archdale Cornerstone, a monthly publication of the Archdale church. Brother Jarrett may be contacted at 1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210.

Fearfully & Wonderfully Made

RON NEWBERRY

Sir Charles Sherrington, the English psychologist, called the human brain the "great ravelled knot." It's only about the size of a grapefuit and weighs about three pounds. Yet, the human brain contains some twelve to fourteen billion cells. Each of these cells sends out branching tentacles to form connections with neighboring cells. One cell might be connected to 10,000 other cells with which it constantly exchanges information. This almost limitless number of connections and cells make the brain the epitome of the information super highway.

To put all this in perspective, someone has put it this way, "To give some idea of what is going on continuously in the brain and spinal cord, imaging 1,000 telephone switchboards, each big enough to service a city the size of New York, all at full speed, receiving and transmitting requests, questions and orders." That's the equivalent of the human brain. Dr. Irwin A. Moon wrote, "Of all the wonders of the world, the human brain is probably the most amazing+and the most mystifying."

The brain has been ignored, abused and misunderstood. Medical researchers have dissected it and psychologists have analyzed it. It is still one of the great mysteries of the universe. Experts estimate that none of us ever use more than a small percentage of its capacity.

> *"...What an incredible God who created man."*

With more electrical circuits than all the radio and television stations in the entire world encases inside the cranium of one human being, we are, as the psalmist David put it in Psalm 139:14, fearfully and wonderfully made. What a piece of work is man. But more importantly, what an incredible God who created man.

Is it not amazing that some who know all of this wish to advance the theory that the human brain is the result of chance? It's interesting that only the human mind with its complexities could come us with such an absurd suggestion. Ironic, isn't it?

Those who take pride and appreciate the status of man in God's creation and are humbled by His efforts to save them will use their minds to shape their lives as they are transformed into the image of Jesus. That is truly life in the Son.

Ron Newberry preaches for the Friendly Ave. church in Greensboro. You may contact him at 5101 W. Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410.

Brotherhood News

CHARLESTON, SCB The Essex Village church of Christ will host its annual Ladies Day on April 27 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The guest speaker will be Judy Miller of Pasadena, Texas. Judy is the wife of Jule Miller and will be speaking on the theme "Climb Up to the Sunshine"

YADKINVILLE, NCB The Yadkinville church of Christ will host its tenth annual Small Church Workshop May 9-10. This year's theme is "Centering in God: Biblical Spirituality in the Small Church." The workshop this year is dedicated to the memory of brother Duane Bender, who died last July. Brother

(continued on next page)

Lift Up Christ

Phil Kinzer

They were grumbling and griping. They were mad at God. They were mad at Moses. They were mad at the world. "No water!" "No bread!" And they detested that angel food. Then came the snakes. Venomous snakes. They were biting everybody in sight. That was the reward for their grumbling and griping; sure and sudden death. So then they cried out to Moses (the one they had been griping to) for mercy, confessing their sin. And Moses prayed for them.

God told Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a stick. Those who had been bitten could focus their attention on the snake on the stick and they would live. Healing would only come when they swallowed their pride and gazed at the giver of healing and life (Num. 21:4-9).

This odd story, in reality, is a picture of the source of the Christian's own healing and life. "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believe in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). Jesus, in talking of His death, was saying that He will be the one to whom we can look and be healed from the venomous bite of sin and Satan. Christ on the cross is God's drawing power for all men.

Christians forging through the wilderness of life sometimes begin to grumble and gripe. Sometimes it is at one another, sometimes it is at God Himself. They can get dissatisfied with the church. The distraction of it all causes them to lose sight of the giver of healing and life+Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Jesus is telling you and me to continually refocus our attention on Him and the cross. If we will do that, we will all be drawn simultaneously to Him and, obviously, the closer we get to Him the closer we will then be to one another. Brothers and sisters who are gazing at the cross will be far more likely to stay together and work together.

You see, we all have one very crucial commonality+the need for continual healing by the blood of Jesus shed on His cross. It is the cross that will keep us together. We will always have disagreements of one kind or another; if not today, then later. If you look hard there is always something you can find to be upset about, but the one thing that will always heal us and keep us together is the habit of focusing on our need for healing by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Phil Kinzer preaches for the Providence Road church of Christ in Charlotte, NC. He can be reached at 4900 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28226.

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Brotherhood News

Bender had attended the workshop for the first time last year and blessed everyone by his attitude and presence. He was preaching for Westside church in Anderson, SC, at the time of his death

MYRTLE BEACH, SCB
It was announced in the March issue of Christian Chronicle that two Carolina churches have renewed fellowship. On October 26, 1995 there was restoration of full fellowship between the Myrtle Beach and Grand Strand churches. They had been separated for more than five years and both parties admitted wrongs in the division that had occurred. This restoration in the peace of Christ is welcomed news to all who love the cause of Christ.

A Psalm

WENDY MORGAN

Editor's note: Several years ago I was teaching a class of twelve year olds at Carolina Bible Camp. The assignment for the day was to write a psalm. As you might imagine, most were of the "Roses are red..." variety. Then, much to both my surprise and delight, there was this piece authored by Wendy Morgan of Charlotte, NC. Wendy is now a junior at David Lipscomb University.

My eyes look out upon the world
and see a mass of beauty.
Light streams flow through the trees
like flecks of silver on a mountain lake.
Water magnifies every image of nature
and holds a whole other life of its own

I do not ask for much,
but am very pleased
with what you have given
my eyes to admire.
By your kindness and grace
scenes of love spread over our world
and make us realize how glorious you are.
Thank you.

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MAY 1996

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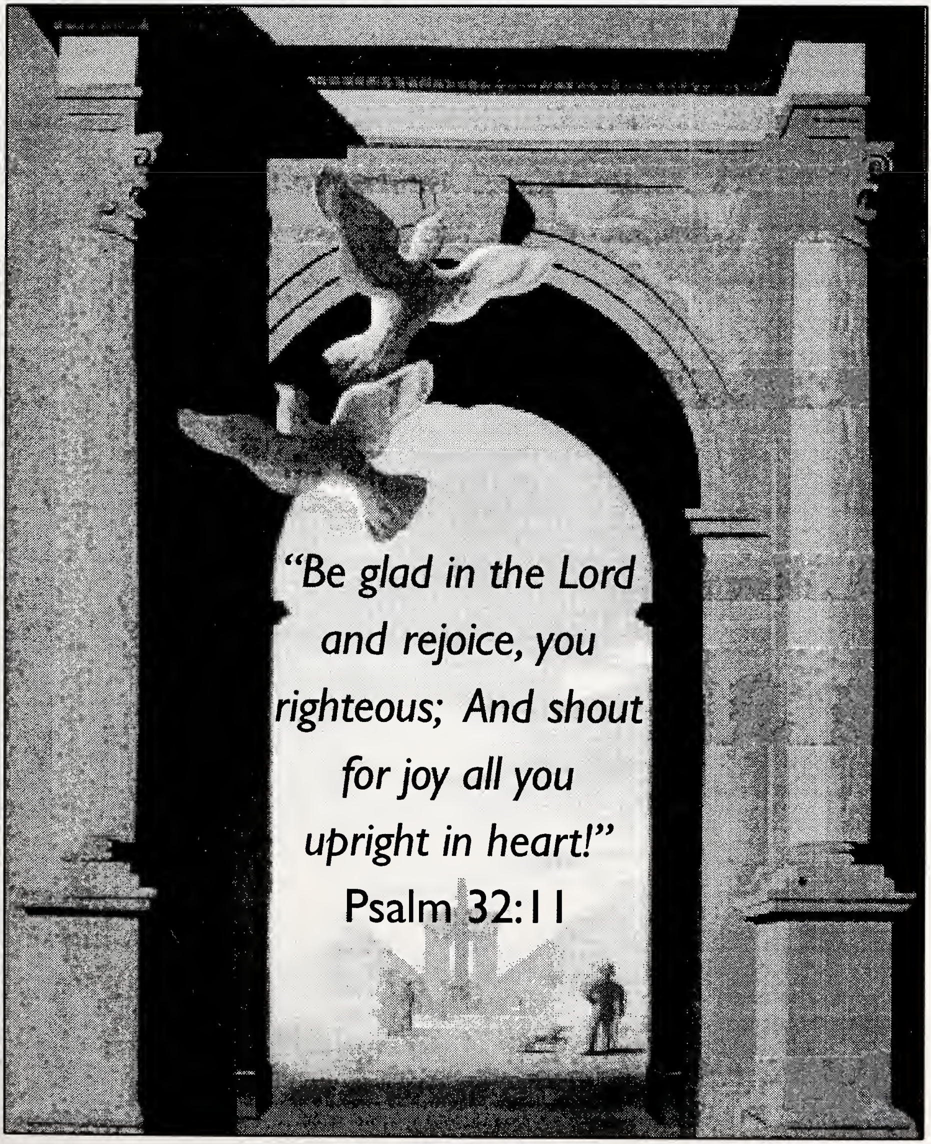

"Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy all you upright in heart!"
Psalm 32:11

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
EDITORIAL
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Dennis Conner, Editor
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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Rd., Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: Individual+$10/year ($19/2 years and $27/3 years); club of five or more+$9 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles+60¢/copy/month; church mailing list (minimum 15) 75¢/copy/month.
Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

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All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceding month.

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The Priority of Corporate Prayer

Dennis Conner

Thomas Watson once wrote, "Christ went more readily to the cross than we do to the throne of grace." Few today would argue with the validity of Watson's observation; most of us would plead guilty to the charge of not praying as we ought. Our neglect of prayer is one of the great scandals of our undisciplined lives. However, one might observe an even greater scandal of neglect, and that is the neglect of corporate prayer. If it is true that individuals don't pray as they ought (and they don't), then it is even more true that churches pray even less.

Most studies on prayer focus on the personal and private prayer life of the individual disciple. To be sure, private prayer is vital to the spiritual growth of the believer, making it understandable why so much attention is devoted to the individual prayer experience. What is not nearly so understandable is why churches have consistently neglected the practice and power of corporate prayer, especially given the New Testament emphasis on the corporate nature of the life of the church. In Acts and the Epistles there is more said about the collective Christian experience (prayer, learning, evangelism, maturity and growth) than the individual Christian experience. This is not to say that one is more important than the other; it is to say that both are vitally connected. As Gene Getz notes in his book *Praying For One Another*, "The personal dimensions of Christianity are difficult to maintain and practice consistently unless they grow out of a proper corporate experience on a regular basis." The early church certainly recognized this truth.

In the book of Acts we see that corporate prayer was given a place of priority in the life and worship of the church. For instance, in Acts 1:12-14 we find that following Jesus' ascension, the apostles and remaining disciples "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." The disciples are already settled into the practice of praying together, and I strongly suspect that when they came together they devoted more than the obligatory four or five minutes to prayer that characterizes many of our assemblies.

In the oft-quoted Acts 2:42 we see that in the life of the first congregation of believers growing out of Peter's Pentecost message, prayer was as central to the life of the church as was apostolic instruction and worship. Look even further to Acts 4:24-31. The young Jerusalem church has faced its first crisis. Peter and John had been brought before the Sanhedrin, questioned, threatened, and released. Leaving the court of the Sanhedrin they sought out their brethren and shared with them what had just happened. The response of the brethren was to lift up their voices and hearts to God in corporate prayer. Luke's description gives the definite impression that there was more to this than our modern practice of having one brother stand up and speak for everybody for a couple of minutes. Take the text as it stands. It says that "*they* raised *their* voice with one accord" (emphasis mine). An even more serious crisis in Acts 12:5 (the martyrdom of James and the imprisonment of Peter) again leads to the church praying to God together.

These biblical examples emphasizing the priority of corporate prayer in the early church give rise to a number of observations. First, *corporate prayer was both a manifestation of and a primary cause of unity* *in the early church.* They came together and prayed in one accord. Their hearts were united in purpose and feeling. But not only was prayer the outgrowth of their oneness; it also strengthened their unity. The effect of corporate prayer upon unity is reciprocal.

Second, *corporate prayer was the first and natural response of the church in times of crisis.* Difficulties did not lead to a shaken faith or a disturbed fellowship. There was no business meeting to decide what should be done next. It was understood what was to be done next–praise God and seek Him out in trusting prayer!

Third, *corporate prayer apparently was not limited to the worship assembly.* With the possible exception of Acts 2:42, there is no indication in the other texts mentioned that would necessarily place these corporate prayers in, much less limit them to, the Lord's Day worship assembly. There were times when the brethren came together for the express purpose of praying together. To be sure, we need more heartfelt prayers in our worship assemblies today; but we also need to pray together more, period. Of course, we really don't have too much of a problem getting the church together outside the regular worship assembly. All we have to do is to announce a covered-dish dinner on Thursday night with lots of good fellowship (translation: fun and games)! But let the church be called together for two hours of prayer on Thursday night and see how many show up.

Yes, we often have more belly in the church than heart.

There are a number of obvious benefits to the practice of corporate prayer. For one, *it utilizes the strength of the collective.* If the prayers of one righteous man avail much (James 5:16), then common sense and simple arithmetic would dictate that the

OBSCURING THE RESSURRECTION

In 1947 G. R. Beasley-Murray wrote a book called *Christ Is Alive!* It is long since out of print, but in it he related a thought provoking incident from the travels of a man named W. Y. Fullerton. Fullerton had visited a reproduction of Calvary in the tiny Swiss village of Dono d'Ossala. The shrine in the village consisted of a series of chapels in memory of various scenes from Christ's path to the cross. The first scene depicted Christ before Herod; the second, Christ being given His cross; the third, Christ taking the cross upon Himself, and so on. Beasley-Murray then describes the following scene:

"The climax of the scenes was in the church itself where there was a great picture of the cross raised, with Christ upon it, and in the skies astonished angels gazing down at the tragedy of human sin and divine love. Up to this point the path was well worn by the feet of the devout pilgrims. For years they had come to witness anew the sufferings of their Savior, and doubtless had mourned and wept at the sight of His agonies. But there they stopped. Their Christ was dead. 'Beyond the church there was another shrine,' wrote Fullerton, 'but the singular thing was that the path, well worn up to this point, now became grasscovered. Evidently nobody went any further. Though it was a wet day, and the grass was long, I went to the summit, and there, behold! was found the chapel of the Resurrection! The builders of Calvary...did not stay with the dead Christ, but the people, the worshippers, never got any further...The grass-grown path was a witness that could not be disputed'."

For many, even among those of us who believe in the historicity of the empty tomb, the doctrine of the resurrection has become a secondary doctrine. We are so captivated by the drama and meaning of the cross (as well we should be) that we find it too easy to fail to appreciate the drama and meaning of the resurrection. However, we must remember that while the cross is central to Christian faith, the resurrection is foundational.

This truth is evident in the earliest Christian sermons recorded in the New Testament as the preaching of the risen Christ went hand-in-hand with the message of the crucified Christ. Without the empty tomb, Jesus was nothing more than a dead hero; another victim of political intrigue and injustice. Thus, the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ is of decisive importance to a biblical understanding of the cross and is the principal argument in support of the deity of Jesus. Intellectually we know this, but in our preaching and teaching the raising of Christ from the dead still does not get anywhere close to equal billing with the killing of Christ.

Scripture pictures the resurrection as being woven into the fabric of our Christian experience. To some extent we recognize that in our teaching on baptism; we often remark that in baptism we are "raised to walk in newness of life." Beyond that, we understand that God has raised us up together with Christ and made us to sit in heavenly places in Him (Eph. 2:6); our justification is inseparably linked to the resurrection (Rom. 4:4); it empowers for ministry and discipleship (Phil. 3:10); it validates our faith (1 Cor. 15:14, 20); and it is the substance of our hope (1 Cor. 15:20; Phil. 3:20-21). Final victory over sin was not accomplished by the cross, but by the empty tomb. As Eugene Stockstill once wrote, "The cross paid for man's sin. The resurrection defeated sin and abolished death, sin's victory." Even the Lord's Supper, which we emphasize primarily as aremembrance of the death of Christ, is also a celebration of the risen Christ. We keep the Supper in anticipation of the eventual and certain return of the living Lord. All of these facts demonstrate the divinely pervasive nature of the resurrection in Christian life.

There is power in the preaching of the resurrection; power for salvation and power for discipleship. The neglect of the doctrine of the resurrection unquestionably cripples the

prayers of two or more righteous people joined together would avail even more. In other words, there is strength in numbers. *Further, it fosters a sense of sharing one another's burdens*. Prayer with and for one another is one way of carrying out the admonition of Galatians 6:2, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Third, *praying together strengthens the resolve of the individual.* By praying with others one discovers that he or she is not left to stand alone. There is strength in the community of faith as each is encouraged by the prayers and faith of the others. Still further, *corporate prayer deepens the relationship among the members of the body.* As believers share their heartfelt concerns and their common faith, a deeper bond is developed. Consequently, the unity of the body is strengthened. And these are just some of the more obvious benefits of the church praying together.

Given the emphasis that the New Testament gives to the practice of corporate prayer and the obvious benefits–and given our stated aim to restore New Testament Christianity in faith and practice–one cannot help but to wonder why praying together is such a neglected practice in our churches. I can suggest a number of reasons. The fear of intimacy, for one. We don't want to get too involved with others, and we certainly don't want others to get to know us on a deeper level.

The demands of modern life on our time and energies, for another. We live in a fast paced society that increasingly makes more demands on our time. It is so easy, without ever intending for it to happen, to let those demands crowd out time for praying with others.

Then there is always the comfort of the status quo. That is, we are comfortable with ministry and life of the church collectively and Christians individually. May we in the future make our way down this grass-grown path more often than we have in the past.

things as they are. We are comfortable with an easy kind of religion that makes no serious demands on us. Or, we are comfortable with the habits and practices we have developed, and to go back to the biblical practice and priority of corporate prayer would disturb our comfort zone. Sometimes we just don't like change, even though it might mean a change toward becoming more biblical.

Selfishness is another reason. Plain and simple, we just don't want to surrender enough of ourselves to get with the brethren and pray.

Finally, it may be nothing more than just a lack of biblical instruction on the subject of corporate prayer. Many simply are not aware of the biblical emphasis on the church praying together. Hopefully, for those with a willing heart, it would just be a matter of being made aware of the biblical examples of the church at prayer in order to correct this deficiency.

By not engaging in the biblical practice of corporate prayer many churches are depriving themselves of a source of tremendous spiritual benefits and power. The challenge before us is to become more biblical in this matter of prayer. The exhortation of the late G. C. Brewer still speaks eloquently to this need, "Therefore, let us get together and pray. Let us unite our hearts in a consuming purpose. Let us stretch the sinews of our souls in reaching out for the salvation of men. Let us pray" (*Contending For The Faith*, Gospel Advocate Co., p. 53).

Joe Adams

Another respected and loved preaching brother has gone home to be with the Lord. We were shocked and saddened to learn of the passing of brother Joe Adams on April 3, 1996. Our understanding is that he had just finished mowing his lawn and then suffered a massive coronary. Joe was the preacher for the West Innes church in Salisbury, NC. This was Joe's second ministry with this congregation, having earlier served the Lord there for nine years in the late 1970's and early 1980's.

When I think of Joe, two words come immediately to mind... "balance" and "gentleness." He always seemed to me to be a humble man, comfortable to be out of the center of attention (a rare trait among preachers), and was not a man given to extremes. As another preacher said to me upon hearing of Joe's death, "He was one of the good guys." Indeed he was.

All of us at *Carolina Christian* extend our heartfelt condolensces to Joe's wife, Dawn, and their family. He fought a good fight, and fought it well.

What Does the Lord Require?

Jim Mullican

The prophet Micah lived in a time much like our own. It was a time of moral decay, a time of political corruption and uncertainty, and a time of religious apostasy and hypocrisy. Even though Micah lived in the eighth century before Christ, the circumstances and his words are remarkably relevant for America and the church as we approach the end of the twentieth century. Hear his words in Micah 6:6-8:

"With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

The key to pleasing God is not to be found in many of the indicators by which many today would judge their brethren. To be found pleasing to God does not depend on what version of the Bible one uses, what school one attended, what papers one writes for or reads, or how small one draws his circle of fellowship. Micah says that our lives must demonstrate three characteristics in order to please God.

First, we must act justly. This means that we must be fair and honest in our dealings with other people, which certainly includes the benefit of the doubt we would want extended to us. Among other things, it also means that we are not free to violate the instructions of Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17. Jesus said that if we have something against a brother, we *must* approach him personally and try to resolve the matter. If that fails, we're to take one or two brethren with us. If after doing so the problem is still unresolved–the offense is still unrepented of (and we need to be sure it is an offense, and not just a matter of opinion)–then, and only then, it is a matter to bemade known to the church. The fact that a brother said something in public with which we disagreed does not change what Jesus said. We are not free to publicly attack those with whom we might judge to have offended us. Much harm has been done in local churches and in the broader fellowship when this principle has been violated.

Second, we must love mercy. The Hebrew word translated "mercy" also means kindness or steadfast love. Some seem to feel that the harder and stricter one is, the more biblical he is. This is just the opposite of what Jesus demonstrated in His own life and thereby taught us to do. Jesus showed kindness and mercy to the woman caught in adultery, the woman at the well who had been married five times and was at the time living with a sixth man, the tax collector Zacchaeus, and other flagrant sinners. His harshest condemnations were reserved for the self-righteous Pharisees who, as a rule, were lacking in mercy or genuine love.

And third, we must walk humbly with God. This means that we must be willing to submit to His will even when it is inconvenient. We must yield to God's authority over our lives. It also means that we must recognize that we have not yet arrived, spiritually speaking! We cannot take the position that "I hold the only correct view on every point of doctrine." That should certainly be our goal, but to think that we have arrived and in the process to deny our humanness smacks of pride and arrogance. This is not to say that essential truth cannot be known; it is to say that since we are imperfect humans, our understanding will also be imperfect. Learning God's truth will require more than a lifetime. I expect it will also occupy some of eternity.

Let our walk with God be guided and determined by divine standards, not human standards. What God ultimately requires of us is an uprightness of character that is clearly seen in our dealings with others.

Jim Mullican serves on the board of ***Carolina Christian*** *and preaches for the Central Haywood church in Clyde, NC. He may be contacted at RR 4 Box 30-A, Clyde, NC 28721.*

What Do You Do When the Fire's Gone Out?

JOHNNY MELTON

In Revelation 2:1-7 we find Jesus' letter to the church in Ephesus. At the time of this letter the Ephesian church was about forty years old. The third generation of Christians likely was coming onto the scene. While there was much to be commended in Ephesus, there was one terrible flaw that if left unchallenged and unchanged would lead to discipline by the Lord. The flaw? They had left their first love.

It was their zeal, their devotion, their care that they had drifted from. In Acts 19:19-20 many of those in Ephesus who had once practiced magic, but then came to know Christ, expressed their love and zeal for Christ by publicly burning their books of magic. In Acts 20:36-38 we find the touching account of Paul's departure from Ephesus. After addressing the elders of the church, they wept over his leaving, embracing and kissing him in the fervency of loving devotion, sorrowful over the fact that they would see his face no more. And in Ephesians 1:15, Paul commended the church for their love for all the saints. However, all this was now in the past.

The fires of love had died out.

Someone has well said, "A noble past ought not to have an ignoble present with a still more ignoble future in prospect." Unfortunately, this was precisely the case at Ephesus. A second generation of Christians had appeared, but they lacked the fervor, enthusiasm and zeal which apparently marked those first converts whose faith and love had been forged in the fires of conflict. They had fallen from the lofty plane of spirit and conduct on which they had begun the Christian life. They were experiencing a descent into mediocrity. The hatred of error persisted and they had continued steadfast in their activities, but the vehicle of faith was coasting and the lava of love was cooling. Another has observed, "A strange thing it is that the hatred of error often survives the demise of love for God and his truth."

Jesus' letter to Ephesus teaches us that when the fire goes out, cold institutionalism results. That is, we tend to look religious without being truly religious. A congregation and its people may actually be quite active and busy with all the externals of being a church, but the right motivation may well be missing. It is quite possible to do right things for wrong reasons. That is characteristic of institutionalism. We become preoccupied with maintaining things as they are, and will expend no little energy doing so, but we are motivated by self-preservation rather than a burning love for Christ. We may be quite capable of identifying error and more than willing to oppose it, but do so with meanness instead of compassion. When such attitudes and practices dominant, the church becomes little more than a corpse, all other indications to the contrary.

However, Christ did not die to establish a corpse. He died to establish a loving, vibrant, and warm-hearted fellowship of Christians. The first love the Ephesians had departed from is the thing that distinguishes a church from an institution.

There comes a time in the life of every church when it should take a fresh inventory of its whole life and disposition, reminding itself of the day when it mounted up with wings like eagles, ran without weariness, walked without fainting, and renewed its strength in the Lord (Isa. 40:31). There comes a time when a congregation should ask of itself, "Is the fire

"However, Christ did not die to establish a corpse. He died to establish a loving, vibrant, and warm-hearted fellowship of Christians."

still burning?" Hopefully the answer will be an unqualified "yes." On the other hand, honesty may compel us to confess otherwise. In such a case, what can we do when the fire has gone out? Listen to what Christ told the church in Ephesus.

First, remember. He said, "Remember the height from which you have fallen..." (verse 5). William Cowper asks, "Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord? Where is the soul-refreshing view of Jesus and his word?" Try to remember what it was like in the beginning when service was motivated by compassion. Try to recall the wonder of God's salvation that once overwhelmed you. Like the prodigal, remember how much better life was when you truly lived and served in the house of your Father.

Next, the Lord says *repent* (also verse 5). Allow the Spirit of God to convict you of the sinful attitudes that presently dominate. The road to recovery begins with the words, "I have sinned." Then, *return.* Jesus put it this way, "...and do the things you did at first." The remembrance of how it had once been must be followed by getting back to doing the things we once did when we were motivated by a genuine love.

So, what is a church or an individual to do when the fire goes out? That depends. If one prefers to be spiritually cold, then do nothing. The rest will take care of itself and judgment will eventually come. On the other hand, those who are willing to hear what the Spirit says to the churches and are willing to remember, repent, and return to their first love will be given the right to eat from the tree of life which is in God's paradise. Let the fires of love be stoked!

Johnny Melton now preaches for the Old Aberdeen Rd. church of Christ in West Point, MS. He may be contacted at PO Box 651, West Point, MS 39773.

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Too Close to the Edge?

RON NEWBERRY

Several years ago I heard a story about a school superintendent who had the task of selecting one of three applicants to fill a vacancy among the school bus drivers. They all appeared to have the same qualifications and experience, making it difficult to know how to make the best decision. Then the superintendent hit upon an ingenious idea.

He loaded all three applicants on a school bus and gave them a tour of the route they would be driving if selected. He approached one particularly sharp curve on a steep grade, pulled off to the side of the road, and parked. Pointing to the curve the superintendent asked, "How close do you think you can drive this bus to that curve without going over the edge with the children?" One potential driver cocked his head and answered, "I believe I can get within two or three inches without any problem."

> **"UNFORTUNATELY, SOME CHRISTIANS TRY TO SEE HOW CLOSE TO THE EDGE THEY CAN GET WITHOUT CROSSING THE LINE INTO THE WORLD AGAIN."**

A second man interested in the job, not to be outdone, responded, "Sir, I believe I can get within an inch without endangering the children." He glanced smugly at the first driver.

The third candidate for the position sat in silence. Finally, the superintendent asked for his appraisal. "Well, how close do you think you can get?" The man looked somewhat puzzled and finally responded, "I'm confused just a bit. You asked how close I could get, but I'm not interested in seeing how close I can get. I want to stay as far away from the edge as I can." Guess who got the job?

The apostle John wrote, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). There's a difference between the way of the world and the lives of Christians. We have to travel this road of life for however long we are on this earth. Unfortunately, some Christians try to see how close to the edge they can get without crossing the line into the world again. We often imply that we're in such great control of our lives that we can get within an inch of the world without going over the edge. That's a prideful attitude filled with spiritual danger. We need to develop the attitude of the third bus driver: stay as far away from the edge as possible.

Take heed to the advice of Paul in Romans 12:9, "...hate what is evil; cling to what is good." If you live as far from the mindset of the world as you can, you will be less prone to go off the deep end. Living life on the edge is not the life of the disciple of Christ.

Ron Newberry preaches for the Friendly Ave. church in Greensboro, NC. You may write to him at 5101 W. Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410.

The Lion's Lunch

Peter Rode

The apostle Peter warned, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

If you've ever watched any of those nature films on television you have probably seen at least one in which a lion hunts down and kills an animal in a herd. Once when we were in the Kruger National Park we actually saw this for ourselves. We watched a couple of lionesses stalk and then separate a young giraffe from it's parents and then go in for the kill. These lionesses acted very cleverly and meticulously, almost like a surgeon wielding a scalpel. They waited for just the right time and then moved in on their target with a deliberateness that meant only one thing. They were going to have giraffe for lunch that day!

> "The lion is a fitting metaphor for Satan. He uses the same sort of tactics that we observe in the animal world, and he targets the same sort of prey."

The lion is a fitting metaphor for Satan. He uses the same sort of tactics that we observe in the animal world, and he targets the same sort of prey. Peter is warning his readers of this very danger, and if we don't think it is a real danger we'll soon end up as his lunch, so to speak. Following are some of his tactics and the kind of prey he targets.

1. *The Small.*

These are the newborn and young in the faith who are not yet strong enough or swift enough to avoid or resist Satan. Unfortunately, too many Christians stay in this infant stage too long and therefore expose themselves unnecessarily. Some never get out of this stage (cf. Heb. 5:11-14).

2. *The Slow.*

Those who are not alert enough to see the danger and are surprised when attacked spiritually (cf. 1 Cor. 13:11-13).

3. *The Sickly.*

These disciples are weak and sickly and don't have the energy or the desire to run from temptation (cf. Gal. 6:1-5).

4. *The Stragglers.*

These are the ones who have wandered away from the fellowship and the protection of the group, making themselves easy targets for the prowling Satan (cf. Heb. 10:24-25).

5. *The Solitary.*

Here we have those who never run with others. They tag along behind the rest of the fellowship. Unless they are very big, strong, and fast they will not be able to last (ct. Eph. 4:11-16).

Something else has just occurred to me. I have never seen a sheep, or even a flock of sheep, kill a lion. Let's not assume that we're stronger than the lion, or he just might end up feasting on us.

Peter Rode, a native of South Africa, serves the Friendly Ave. church. He may be contacted at 5101 W. Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410.

Waiting On God

Amos Allen

The author of a recent book wrote that the holy God will often take the long, hard road in his dealings with His people instead of the quick and easy one. This means that we must cultivate the virtue of patience in our relationship with Him. The Bible calls this "waiting" on God.

As we look back in time we see God working in this way time and time again. For instance, we see the Almighty move slowly when He deals with the Hebrew nation. His relationship with Israel was a long term one in which God rarely hurried things up. His purposes for Israel generally unfolded slowly.

The ministry of Jesus is also characterized by this strategy. In the desert the Evil One showed Jesus some ways to get His kingdom up and running with a minimum of effort or hassle. Jesus declined and let God unfold His redemptive plan His way.

Further, there is a section in Acts that retells a sermon given by Stephen in his defense before the Sanhedrin (Acts 6:8-7:60). He retold the stories of three men from Jewish history–Abraham, Joseph, and Moses. Abraham never did see the countless descendants God promised. Joseph was ridiculed by his jealous brothers. Moses was rejected as the leader of the Hebrews. Stephen called these three forward as witnesses of what people can do to God's chosen messengers, but all three also demonstrated the slow-moving (from our perspective) workings of God.

As evidence of His careful providence, Abraham waited for years to be given the son God promised. Joseph endured slavery and prison while waiting for his dreams to come true. Moses herded sheep in the desert for forty years before becoming the leader of Israel.

Longsuffering, patience, tolerance, and endurance. These are some of the characteristics of God that show forth in the way He handles our lives. He appears willing to allow us to suffer the consequences of our choices, to question and doubt, to indulge in self-pity, and just to make a general mess of things. None of these things defeat Him or His purposes. Homelessness, bankruptcy, abuse, slavery, prison, inability, stupidity, and even rebellion are not so big that God can't work with us and produce something great.

However, there is one characteristic that God works well with–humility. Humility is understanding self in light of who God is. Abraham learned to depend on and wait for God. He finally saw that the Lord could do things better than he could. Joseph discovered that living life God's way resulted in unbelievable blessings. Moses learned again and again that God is faithful. In the course of God's dealings with them, all of these believers learned to wait on God with humility.

There's a valuable lesson here for me. If I learn to trust my Father, I will wait for Him even when I don't see or understand what's going on. His seeming absence is my opportunity to grow in patience. Hard times are an occasion to increase the intensity of my prayers. His silence is a good time to learn to listen. I just need to remember that God knows what He is doing, and that God will accomplish His purposes regardless of my failings. Still, I must learn–as did Abraham, Joseph, Moses and a host of others–that if I will wait on God in humble obedience, things will always work out a lot better.

Amos Allen preaches for the Meadowbrook Rd. church in Asheboro, NC. He may be contacted at 631 Meadowbrook Rd., Asheboro, NC 27203.

A House Divided

Jim Yarian

Jesus prayed, "...that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent me" (John 17:23).

Paul wrote, "I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree that there be no dissension among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10).

I hate religious division.

Excuse me for sounding so absolute, so dogmatic, so negative, but that just expresses the way I feel. I haven't always felt this way; there was a time when religious differences didn't affect me one way or another. I don't know for sure, but it seems that something happened with the passing of time to solidify my emotional reaction to the subject.

I believe Thomas Campbell, famous restoration leader of an earlier generation, summed up the situation well when he stated in his *Declaration and Address*, "Division among Christians is horrid evil, fraught with many evils. It is antichristian...antiscriptural...antinatural." Common sense, as well as Scripture, points to unity as the goal for those who claim to follow Jesus.

Neither time nor space allow me to enumerate all of the issues upon which believers are divided. Granted, some of them are "major" while others appear so "trivial," but all of them are divisive. All of them tend to alienate. All of them fracture a body that was intended to be united. And that's a shame–a tragic shame.

Maybe unity is a pretty lofty goal, but just because it seems difficult to achieve doesn't mean that it isn't worth striving for and pursuing. In fact, the will of God demands that we keep trying to build bridges; that we try to create harmony out of strife.

To pursue unity doesn't imply that we don't seek truth. All too often individual Christians or entire congregations have felt pressure to choose one or the other in situations involving religious differences. Take note: it is not necessarily an either-or proposition. Both truth and unity play an important part in God's divine plan of salvation.

Finally, recall these words of Jesus in Matthew 12:15 (later quoted and immortalized, incidentally, by Abraham Lincoln in a June, 1858 debate over slavery), "...every city or house divided against itself will not stand."

You make the application!

Jim Yarian and his family live in Columbia, SC.

Brotherhood News

Mike Mobley

MOCKSVILLE, NC... *Carolina Bible Camp & Retreat Center* recently received a check from Food Lion in the amount of $1,640.57 as its share of the proceeds from the 1995 Food Lion Shopping Days campaign. The fund-raising effort was conducted last November. The board of CBC&RC wishes to thank everyone who shopped at Food Lion and thereby supported the camp in this effort. CBC&RC also announces the *First Annual Ed Hill Singing School*, which will be conducted August 16-17 at the camp. Brother Hill, who died in 1994, was a charter member of the board of Carolina Bible Camp and was a member of the Kannapolis church in Kannapolis, NC. He loved singing and devoted much of his time to

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Keep the Faith

Dennis Conner

In Revelation 6:9-10 the fifth seal is opened and the cry of those martyrs slain for the word of God and for their testimony of faith is heard, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Their impassioned plea is a familiar one to the people of God throughout the ages. "Will you hear us, God?" "Will you do something, Lord?" Perhaps the cry of "How long?" has even escaped your own lips. You have been treated unfairly by someone–lied about, slandered, or betrayed–and you want justice from the Lord. Or perhaps you feel that life itself has been tremendously unfair to you, and in fact it has. You want justice. You want things to be made right. You pour out your heart to God, but He doesn't respond (or so it seems). You cry out again, only this time with more urgency, more anger, and perhaps with even an element of doubt. If so, then hear the story of a poor widow as told by Jesus in Luke 18:1-8.

There are two characters in the story, a widow and a judge, and the story itself is brief but pointed. Widows in that day and culture had few rights and opportunities. They were easily exploited by the wealthy and the unscrupulous. The death of a husband left a woman unprotected and vulnerable. The widow in the parable has obviously been the victim of some injustice.

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Dora Conner, Manager

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training young men to leadsinging in worship. For more information on the singing school you may contact Wilson Burton at 142 Mary Circle, Concord, NC 28025.

CHARLOTTE, NC... In an effort to provide spiritual nurturing and growth for the children of our congregations and their neighbors, the *Providence Road church of Christ* if offering "Youth Quest Day Camp" this summer. "Youth Quest" is a five day experience committed to providing fun in a Christian environment for grades one through six at a local park. Activities will include Bible study and other Bible related activities, nature activities, sports, crafts, and drama. For information you may contact the church office at (704) 364-0748, or you may write the church at 4900 Providence Rd., Charlotte, NC 28226.

NEW ELLENTON, SC... The *New Ellenton church of Christ* has begun a fund drive for a new building. The are asking congregations in the Carolinas to ask each member for a one dollar donation toward this cause. The fund drive began April 28 with a special service at which Clifford Davison of High Point, NC, spoke. If you can help, contact the church at PO Box 273, New Ellenton, SC 29809, or call (803) 652-7110. Willie Thompson serves the church as its preacher.

WEST MONROE, LA... AMEN, a ministry of the White's Ferry Rd. church to Christians in the military, plans a letter blitz for the soldiers currently serving in Bosnia. You may send names and requests to AMEN, 3201 N. 7th St., West Monroe, LA 71291.

The judge is described by Jesus as having no fear of God or any concern and respect for his fellow man. He is devoid of morals and compassion. In Jesus' time the wheels of justice usually turned in the direction of those who offered a bribe. Likely this judge's regard was for whoever offered him the most. He reflected the bankrupt values that characterized that age.

The story moves quickly and without many details as Jesus speaks it. The widow has come to the corrupt judge demanding justice. She has been wronged by some adversary and wants it to be made right. When the judge rejects her case she develops a strategy of persistence, relentlessly dogging him. Finally, the judge gives in because he simply wishes to be rid of the woman. He finds in her favor not because it is the just thing to do, but because he has been worn down.

> "For Jesus, though, the issue is not the faithfulness of God, but the faithfulness of the believer."

Taken out of its context (which it usually is) and treated strictly as an allegory (which is the temptation), the parable is often understood to mean something like this: the widow is us, the judge is God and we must keep going to God with our requests (whatever they may be) until He answers. This may seem an obvious interpretation to some, but it is altogether wrong.

Although it is usually treated as such, this is not a parable about prayer in general. It comes on the heels of Jesus' lengthy response to the Pharisees' question about when the kingdom of God would come (17:20-37). Jesus tells them that the kingdom has already been initiated and will be fully and finally realized when the Son of man is revealed again. Then, Luke says, He spoke this parable to encourage people to pray and not lose heart. It illustrates the need for a persevering trust in God.

The meaning of the story turns upon an unstated, but understood, contrast. Rather than understanding it as a straightforward allegory (the woman is us, the judge is God), we understand Jesus to be saying instead, "You are not like the woman, for you do have a protector. And God is not like this judge, because He cares and listens." His point is that if this callous, uncaring judge could be moved to act by the widow's persistence, then how much more will a caring God answer the cries of his people? God will keep His word to be attentive to the cries and needs of His elect.

The timing of God's answers, however, is another matter, and that leads us to the real issue of the story. As the elect we often want to know, "Will God be faithful to us?" For Jesus, though, the issue is not the faithfulness of God, but the faithfulness of the believer. The question is not "Howlong O Lord?" but "Did you keep the faith?" Jesus concludes the story by asking, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" Will He find that we kept the faith? Did we keep praying and refuse to lose heart as we waited on God? Did we trust God's promises?

So, when we find ourselves gazing up into heaven and asking the Lord, "How long?" we might also envision Jesus looking down at us and asking, "Will you keep the faith?" We know that He is coming back for us. I just wonder what He'll find?

A Spirit of Forgiveness

PAUL JARRETT

have you ever heard someone argue that you cannot forgive a person until they ask to be forgiven? I have, and I have never understood how those who do so can make such an argument in light of what Jesus did as He hung on the cross. Those who were putting Him to death certainly had not requested His forgiveness, but still He prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

Now, I would agree that the forgiveness Jesus requested to be granted to His murderers, God's forgiveness that leads to salvation, first had to be accepted by them in order for them to benefit from the forgiveness that leads to salvation. However, there is a difference between the individual's willingness to forgive (the possession of a spirit of forgiveness) and God's actual forgiveness of sins for salvation. In Jesus' case, a spirit of forgiveness was demonstrated prior to its being requested by the offenders. I would like to suggest three reasons why we need to be willing to extend forgiveness to others even before they request it.

First, the alternative to the kind, forgiving spirit which grants personal forgiveness even to the impenitent is to have a heart that is filled with "bitterness, and wrath and anger and clamor and slander... along with all malice" (Eph. 4:31). The key to putting these destructive attitudes aside is to develop a forgiving spirit.

Second, when we are unwilling to grant forgiveness to others we burn the bridge over which we may one day need to walk. All of us are prone to sin. We all do harm to others from time to time. Sometimes the hurt is deliberate. More often the hurt we cause others is unintentional and results from our own weakness. In some instances we may not even be aware of the hurt we have caused. In every instance we all need to know that forgiveness is available even before we ask.

This brings me to my final reason for affirming the need to extend forgiveness even before it is requested. This point is that it is the awareness of forgiveness that sometimes encourages repentance on the part of offenders. It is our human tendency to think that holding a grudge, or making known our hurt and anger, will force people who have wronged us to beg our forgiveness. However, we can be thankful for the fact that God knows better. Jesus extended forgiveness to us before we requested it so that we might know "the kindness of God (that) leads to repentance" (Rom. 2:4).

How many prodigals are remaining in sin because the church is filled with elder brothers and sisters who are waiting for them to beg their forgiveness? How many prodigals might come home if God's people were doing a better job of following the example of the Father whose forgiveness is already there awaiting only the opportunity to allow the lost one to experience His love and mercy? When will we learn that, as we are taught in Proverbs 10:12, "love covers all transgressions?"

Paul Jarrett is a frequent contributor to ***Carolina Christian*** *and preaches for the Archdale church of Christ in Charlotte, NC. He may be contacted at 1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210.*

2131

Jerry Alderson

> *"...I could not help but be impressed with such dedication, such obvious enjoyment of the work he had chosen."*

Normally someone would have to explain to me what the number 2,131 signifies since it pertains to something in the world of sports. My memory has no recollection of hearing 2,130 as a significant number in history, either. I don't follow sports...never have. But while traveling in my car one Wednesday last summer I heard callers to talk shows talking about a fellow named Cal Ripken, and the comments about his character, and not just his athletic ability, were so impressive that I became intrigued. I had now learned that that very evening Ripken would surpass the long-standing record of 2,130 consecutive games played that had been in the record books my entire lifetime. Somehow I was attracted to the ceremonies that were to follow that evening's game and I sat in front of the TV set almost mesmerized until nearly 12:30 a.m. Remember, I don't care for sports!

Indeed, Ripken was the quiet, unassuming person that the callers had described and I could not help but be impressed with such dedication, such obvious enjoyment of the work he had chosen. One columnist wrote that some speak of how lucky Ripken was to never be hurt during those thirteen or so years. "Actually," the columnist pointed out, "he has been hurt every year, but not hurt enough to justify, in his mind, taking a day off. What defines Ripken is his definition of 'enough'." Another paper listed at least two sprained ankles and one twisted knee during games–but they were not enough to cause his absence from the assembly called a "game."

In Ripken's remarks during the ceremonies following the game, he said something appropriate for the way we should feel about ourselves and the assembly called the "church": "I know how important it is to be there for your team and to be counted on by our team." I was reminded of the statement that is often heard, "Sometimes the greatest thing you can do for the Lord's church family is to just be here."

---

*This article by Jerry Alderson is taken from the **Archdale Adviser**, the bulletin of the Archdale church of Christ in Charlotte, NC.*

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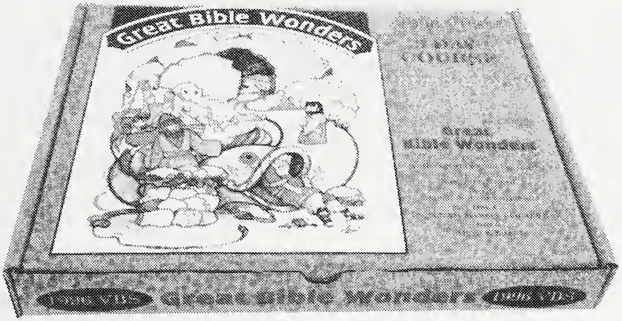
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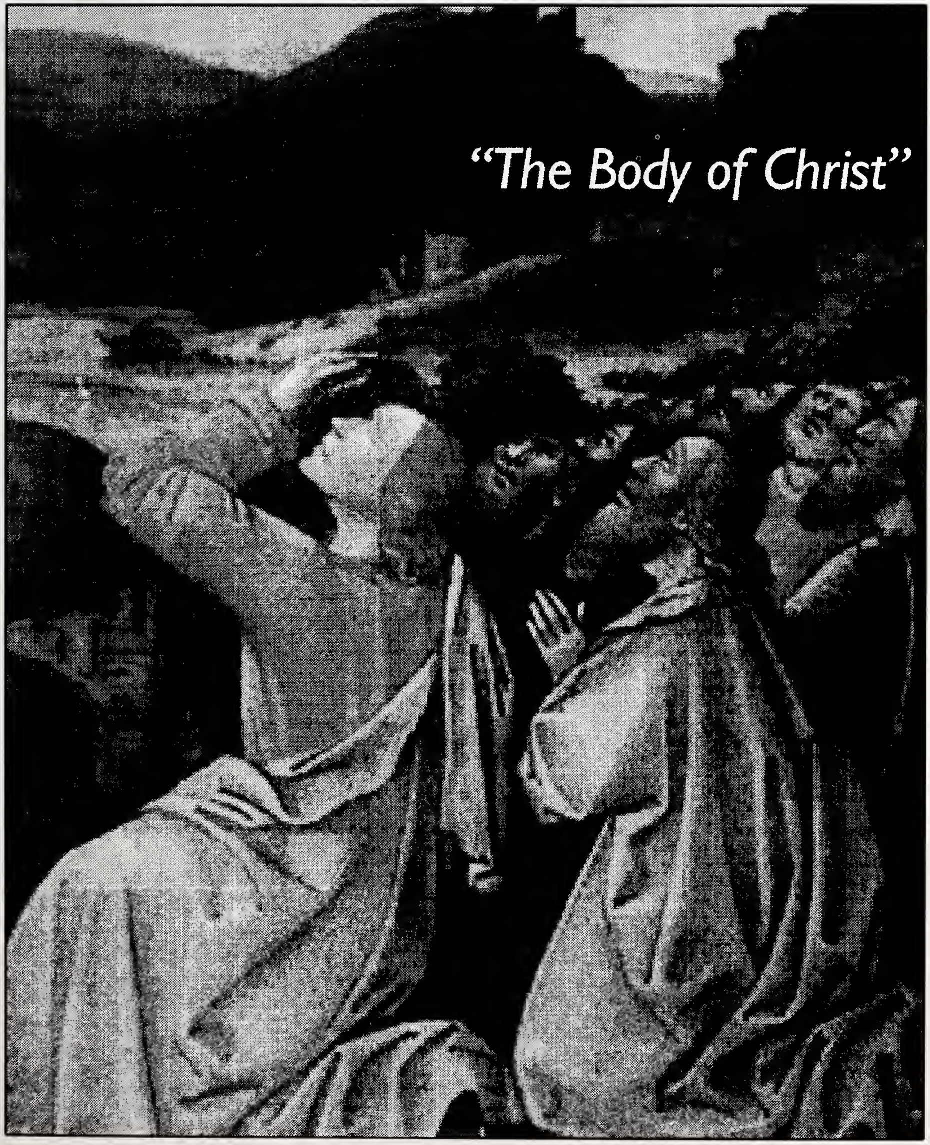
CAROLINA christian



"The Body of Christ"

CAROLINA christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
EDITORIAL & PUBLICATION STAFF
Dennis Conner, Editor
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
Jim Mullican, Associate Editor
Michael Mobley, News Editor
CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Rd., Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: Individual–$10/year ($18/2 years and $26/3 years); club of five or more–$9 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles–60¢/copy/month; church mailing list (minimum 15) 75¢/copy/month.
Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.
CAROLINA CHRISTIAN

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes
with Form 3579 to:

Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739
Address editorial matter to:
Dennis Conner
PO Box 1369
Yadkinville, NC 27055-1369
Address news items to:
Michael Mobley
301 Reed Creek Rd.
Mooresville, NC 28115

Address commercial advertising inquiries to:
Jacobs List, Inc.
PO Box 120
Clinton, SC 29325

Address all advertising pertaining to the churches of Christ or its members (including related organization) to the editor.

All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceding month.

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The Cross of Commitment

DENNIS CONNER

In 1967 D. Elton Trueblood wrote *The Incendiary Fellowship*. Chapter one begins with the accurate but unfortunate observation that "committed Christians are a minority at the present time." Sadly, the evidence nearly thirty years later is that little has changed. While a myriad of other movements have brought a tidal wave of change to our society, the advance of the Christian movement in this nation has been greatly hindered by lukewarmness, encroaching worldliness, insincere professions, covetousness, and division. Most today would prefer the comfortable religion of the padded pew that makes few demands to the discomfort and outright costliness of personal crossbearing.

To what might we attribute this great lack of commitment? Many possible answers might be suggested, but ultimately there is only one...we have lost sight of the cross. This is not to say that we do not talk about the cross. As a matter of fact, there is quite a bit of cross talk in the church. Nearly every public prayer will contain a reference to the cross or the death of Christ. The observance of the Lord's Supper always brings recognition of the cross. Books about the cross are innumerable. The word "cross" is firmly imbedded in our Christian vocabulary. Yes, we are quite adept at talking about the cross. It's just that we aren't as good about living the life that is shaped by the cross. The cross of Christ is not only the central item of Christian doctrine, but also of Christian experience. Nowhere is this truth taught more clearly and convictingly than in Mark 8:31-38.

A proper understanding of the relationship between the cross and Christian commitment begins with a recognition of what commitment cost Jesus. According to Mark, "He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (8:31). Mark calls our attention to the divine necessity, the holy "must," of the cross. The Son of Man *must* suffer. The cross would become, and indeed at that point already was, the defining experience of Jesus' life. Contrary to the image of the confused peasant of **Jesus Christ Superstar** who stumbled onto his destiny, Jesus Son of Man possessed a crystal clear vision of His. Mark's Jesus was not surprised by the cross; He was committed to it. The cross shaped Jesus' whole life and experience as long as He walked this earth. For Him the cross was the cost of commitment to the will of His Father; for Jesus the road to glory ran by way of the cross.

Recognizing this, can the disciple of Jesus expect to arrive at glory by taking some other route? Absolutely not, and that is precisely the point that Mark wishes to make in this text. He notes that Jesus said, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it" (8:34-35). Just as the cross shaped Jesus' life and experience, so it must also shape the life and experience of His disciples. So much for our Americanized, candy-coated brand of discipleship.

This is radical stuff, and the church surely needs more of this kind of radicalism. It isn't that difficult to find people who want to follow Jesus; the difficulty lies in finding those who want to follow Jesus on His terms. And what are those terms?

First, the disciple is called to *self-denial.* This is a call that is diametrically opposed to the values of our culture. Greed, self-assertion, self-will, self-rule, self- preservation. These are our American values. Very simply, we value self above all else, and it was that way in Jesus' day as well. This is a call that when taken seriously forces us to confront the very essence of our nature. Christ callsus to deal with our terminal self-love, and deal with it we must. Our failure to make much of an impact on our society can be traced directly to the failure, even refusal, to take this call seriously.

Authentic Christian commitment requires that we disown ourselves and renounce the right to live life as we please. We are to repudiate our pride, our arrogance, and our belief that we know the best way to live our lives. To deny self is to recognize Christ's claim over our lives and His right to rule. Therein lies the problem: we just don't like someone else sitting on the throne, even if that someone is Jesus.

Jesus' other term for following is found in the *call to death,* " ...and take up his cross." This is an image that spoke powerfully to Jesus' audience. They knew about crosses. They had seen them. Crucifixion wasn't carried out in a closed chamber somewhere in the bowels of a prison. Crucifixion was a public spectacle, unlike our civilized executions today that are witnessed by a few but unseen by the public. But how can this image speak to us today? How can we identify with its meaning? To answer this we must ask what the cross meant for Jesus? For Him it meant more than inconvenience or even affliction. It meant suffering and death. There it is. The cross was an instrument of death. Just as the "must" of suffering and death applied to Christ, so it also applies to the disciple of Christ. This is the cost of our commitment to Him. Paul phrased it this way, "I am crucified with Christ."

Involved in this term of discipleship is death to the old life of sin, death to self-rule, death to our own self-promoting agendas, death to our pride, crucifixion of our fleshly lusts and passions. And for most of us it is a violent death.

Seldom seen today is the kind of radical, cross-bearing Christianity that brought a pagan world to its knees. We have lapsed into a comfortable religiosity that poses little threat, if any, to the modern world. The great need today is for individuals and churches whose lives and ministries are focused in and shaped by the cross of Christ. The problem, however, is that too many of us would rather wear a cross around our necks than embrace the cross in our hearts.

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Selecting Elders

JIM MULLICAN

As the congregations in the Carolinas continue to grow, more and more are able to ordain elders and deacons in being conformed to God's will for the organization and government of the local church as revealed in the New Testament. Many congregations are finding themselves in what is for them unfamiliar territory as they seek to ordain elders for the first time. How are they to go about it? And are later appointments to be handled any differently? Who chooses the men to be appointed? These are just some of the questions to be considered.

Judging from some of the bulletins I read, different procedures are used in different places. When elders are already serving it sometimes happens that they select the men whom they want as additional elders or deacons, then inform the congregation, and if no one submits a "scriptural objection," the men chosen by the elders are appointed. While it cannot possibly be maintained that such a procedure is against the Scriptures, it does, however, possess a number of problems.

First, the men selected by the elders may indeed be qualified, but other qualified men may have been passed over simply because their views were not perfectly in line with those of the existing eldership. Further, it also ignores the congregation's attitude toward the men proposed to lead it. Men may meet the biblical qualifications–one wife, believing children, etc.–but still not have the confidence of the congregation. No signed "scriptural objections" may have been submitted, butstill the congregation may lack confidence in a man's ability to lead.

The New Testament does offer some guidance on how the church should select its leaders. For instance, in Acts 6:17 the apostles did not propose seven names to the congregation, but instead directed the congregation to propose seven men to serve the church. It may be debated whether these men were deacons, but the word for "deaconship" is certainly used to describe their work. In Titus 1:5 the preacher is charged with the responsibility of appointing elders, but except for the characteristics of elders which are listed, no details of the appointment process are given. However, the word translated as "appoint" is the same one used in Acts 6:3 for the seven deacons chosen by the church and then appointed by the apostles. In Acts 14:23 a different word is used which literally means to "choose by a show of hands."

So while the selection of elders and deacons is not be treated as a political election, the Scriptures do indicate that the process is to be an expression of the will of the congregation made known in accord with God's guidelines. The following procedures have been used successfully both in appointing elders or deacons for the first time and to appoint men to an existing eldership or deaconship. I believe they best accord with the Scriptural with the scriptural directions given.

STEP ONE:

Teaching that focuses on the duties, characteristics and pitfalls of the eldership (as well as the deaconship). This task is usually left for the preacher to do. In addition, it is also suggested that attention be given to the selection process to be utilized and the timetable that will be followed.

STEP TWO:

Ask the congregation to submit in writing the names of men whom they believe will be qualified to serve and who have demonstrated a shepherd's heart. The names may be submitted to the existing eldership, to a specially-appointed committee, or to the preacher, depending on the congregation's situation and desire. Serious candidates may be those suggested by at least twenty percent of the congregation, or whatever level is deemed appropriate.

STEP THREE:

The serious candidates are interviewed. They are asked about their willingness to serve and their understanding of the function of elders. At this time the candidates may withdraw their names if they wish to do so. A week or two may be required for this process.

STEP FOUR:

The men who are willing to serve are announced to the congregation and a week or two is allowed for objections based on Scripture to be submitted in writing.

STEP FIVE:

These objections, if any, are discussed with the man involved. He may withdraw or he may satisfactorily explain the perceived problem. The elders, or the selection committee, will need to use wisdom and sound judgment, but only as a last resort should an objector be brought in to confront a candidate.

STEP SIX:

Names are again submitted to the congregation and the people are asked to express either their personal confidence, or lack of the same, in the various men. At this point it usually seems best to agree that no one will serve who does not receive eighty to ninety percent support. This figure should be set at the beginning of the process.

STEP SEVEN:

A public ceremony to appoint those chosen is held, usually in the context of a Sunday morning worship assembly.

It goes without saying, of course, that this entire process should be initiated with and carried out in a spirit of intense prayer as the will of God is sought. To engage in such an important process without seeking God in serious prayer is to invite failure and court disaster.

There may be variations to this suggested process, but what has been suggested here employs biblical principles and examples. It also allows the congregation to express its feelings and desires three times in the course of the process. As a result, it is the church, and not just the elders, who makes the selection.

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The Body of Christ

Paul E. Jarrett

The church has been referred to by some as the second incarnation of Christ. This reference is to the fact that, as His body, the church manifests Christ's presence in the world. If the church is to properly present Jesus to the world its members, individually and collectively, need to make it their goal to be like Him.

> "...as His body, the church manifests Christ's presence in the world."

If we are to be like Him, we must come to know Him. With that in mind I asked five of my fellow ministers (all from South Carolina) to assist us in coming to a fuller appreciation of the Spirit, heart, mind, eyes, and hands of Jesus. I want to thank them for their efforts and commend their work to you for your edification.

This summer I will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of the first sermon I ever preached. The title of that first sermon was "Complete Restoration." In that lesson I commend the church for its efforts to restore the forms of New Testament Christianity, but I expressed the on-going need to make every effort to restore the spirit that characterized the early church. While I did not realize it at the time, I have come to appreciate the fact that from the start of my ministry there has been a message on my heart that I have continued to proclaim at every opportunity over the past three decades.

As an eighteen year old, the sermon I preached was larger than myself. I was a poor example of the spirit of love and zeal which I spoke of in that first sermon. I can also relate to Peter on Pentecost when he apparently did not fully understand the meaning of his own words when he referred to how God's promise would extend to "all who are far off" (i.e. Gentiles). In like manner, when I spoke of the need to go beyond the forms of our faith and embrace the spirit of our calling I had no real understanding of the problems, and certainly not the solution.

As I have matured in my own faith I trust I am more representative of the love and zeal I spoke of thirty years ago. I am sure that I have, through continued study, come to a better grasp of our problem and the solution. I have come to see that our problem has been (and in some instances continues to be) a matter of focus. Therefore, the solution calls for us to refocus, or at the least to expand our focus.

Our success in restoring the forms of New Testament Christianity can be attributed to our focus on external forms such as acts of worship, church organization, terms of membership, role of faith, terminology (i.e. names) and mission. Our lack of equal success in the restoration of the spirit of New Testament Christianity may be attributed to our failure to focus on Jesus as the ultimate pattern for His body, the church.

While the forms of our faith certainly have their place, it is important for us to avoid reducing God's pattern for His church to merely that of an organization. We must never forget that ultimately the church as the body of Christ is a living organism. As such its real power is realized when its members possess His Spirit, His heart, His mind, His eyes, and His hands.

It is my prayer that the content of this issue of Carolina Christian will contribute to a church that exhibits not only the forms on New Testament Christianity, but the spirit of those first Christians as well. A failure to do so will place us under the condemnation expressed by Paul when he warned Timothy of those who are "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power" (II Timothy 3:5).

Paul Jarrett preaches for the Archdale church in Charlotte, NC. He is a frequentcontributor to ***Carolina Christian*** *and has served as Special Editor of other theme issues. He may be contacted at 1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210.*

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The Hands of Christ

Ken Forrest

The hands that once held the Tree of Life within their grasp (Gen. 3:22), have now been stained by the innocent blood of God's Son on the accursed tree. With His hands came healing (Matt. 8:3); with our hands came physical abuse (Matt. 26:67). With His hands came an association of brotherhood (Matt. 12:49); with our hands came betrayal (Matt. 26:23). With His hands came security and assurance (Matt. 14:31); with our hands came crucifixion and death (Acts 2:23). When Pilate saw He could not prevail upon the angry mob, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it" (Matt. 27:24). "See to it?" Indeed! It was with lawless hands that He was "seen to" (Acts 2:23), and a cruel death by crucifixion ensued. Satan must have felt a temporary sense of exaltation on that day as the heel of our Lord was bruised. But it was not to last! For with outstretched hands toward heaven, our triumphant Lord dealt the death blow to the head of Satan and burst asunder the door of His borrowed tomb!

Thomas, unwilling to believe the testimony of his brethren regarding Jesus' post-resurrection appearance to them, awaited a clear confirmation of indisputable physical evidences. Finding himself overwhelmingly satisfied, Thomas then recognized Him as "My Lord and my God" (John 20:24-29). By means of the resurrection Jesus accomplished His work in glorious fashion and subsequently assumed His legitimate place at the right hand of the throne of God.

But, regardless of the relief that might be felt at having secured our newfound condition of sonship through Christ, we are still faced with the daily struggle of continuing to cleanse these bloody hands of ours. We rejoice in the glory of God's favor toward man, and the marvel of His love as He "gave His only begotten Son" for the purpose of establishing access to "everlasting life" (John 3:16). This is not established through an expressed goal of condemnation, but rather in a provision of salvation (John 3:17). To be saved! What a marvel of God's wisdom - the message of "Christ crucified" (I Cor. 1:23). Not merely a message to be heard, but a response to be given. A personal consideration of the cross that He bore should stimulate us to take up of our own "cross" daily (Luke 9:23f). Doing so causes us to "labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now" (I Cor. 4:12f). Realizing that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, I mournfully confess, "I am the chief of sinners!"

The apostle Paul, of course, presented this provocative truth in the opening chapter of his first letter to Timothy as a reflection upon the undeniable love of God for mankind. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance." That is, this will never fail; it is not a mere possibility…it is foundational truth. We sometimes get so involved in various programs and projects that we lose sight of what it is all about: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Paul raises himself up as an example of what the grace of God can do in the life of a sinner. By responding in faithful obedience to the Gospel of Christ, as Paul did, we too can receive the benefits of God's free gift as seen in the complete forgiveness of past sins (Tit. 2:11-14). This obedience, and subsequent redemption, constitutes a complete change from a life of sinfulness to a life ofdetermined godliness.

> "To be saved! What a marvel of God's wisdom– the message of Christ Crucified."

When we cast away our prideful selves, and come to admit the enormity of our sins, we will say with Paul, "I am the chief of sinners."

When we think about Jesus in terms of His sacrifice and role in our salvation, there is an inescapable sense of responsibility that bears upon an assessment of ourselves. Exactly what does it mean to be "the chief of sinners"? Being the "chief" usually carries a good connotation. How could Paul have honestly considered himself to be "the chief of sinners"? Was he not the chief of the apostles? (cf. I Cor. 15:9). Was he not the chief of the disciples? (cf. Eph. 3:8). Were there not worse sinners than Paul? Paul came to this conclusion about his lowly state based solely upon having looked at his own sin, and no one else's. One of the greatest hindrances to our recognition of sin is the tendency to reduce the greatness of our sins by comparing them with the sins of others.

Paul hardly knew how to talk about himself without first talking about Jesus. When he looked upon Christ's perfection, he saw his own flaws. When he looked upon Christ's purity, he saw his own shame. When he looked upon Christ's kindness, he saw his own hatefulness. When he looked upon Christ's knowledge, he saw his own ignorance. When he looked upon the sinless Savior, he did not look at anyone else but himself, the chief of sinners.

Personally...honestly... shamefully...what do you see when you look at yourself? Look deeper! See the hands outstretched as they gently, yet firmly, draw you ever closer. Hear the words of Jesus as He lovingly comforts your broken spirit: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who was given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:27-29). Take hold of salvation; take hold of the hands of Christ!

Yes, the hands of Christ hold within them our very salvation. That truth holds great implications for His church. As Christ's church we are now to be His hands in the world. We are to be His hands reaching out a lost world. When we think of the hands of Christ we think of compassion and self-sacrificing love. The church, then, is to extend to a lost world the compassion of Christ and the self-sacrificing love of Christ. Once we have taken hold of salvation for ourselves, we then, as the hands of Christ in the world today, are to offer the hand of life to those who are in the grip of death. He reached down so that we might reach out.

Ken Forrest preaches for the Charlotte Ave. church of Christ in Rock Hill, SC. He may be contacted at 339 Charlotte Ave., Rock Hill, SC 29730.

The Heart of Christ

Ron Adams

Peter Ustinov, the actor, playwright, director, and humorist, is one of the funniest, brightest men that I've ever had the opportunity of reading or watching. He has a keen eye, loves to observe human foibles, and has a sardonic wit. He sees what is going on in society and is able to poke fun at it, making people laugh at their own inconsistencies.

In a statement that was typical of his keen sense of observation and wit, Ustinov said, "Charity is more common than compassion, because charity is tax deductible while compassion is merely time-consuming." There's something humorous about that. But there's also something cutting and terribly compelling about it, because he's absolutely right.

There's all the difference in the world between cold charity and warmhearted compassion. Charity can be purely external, coldly calculated. But compassion is internal, a motivation of the heart that is pure, rich, and absolutely vital. It is also a distinctive motivational factor as far as spiritual experience is concerned.

When we think of compassion, we need to ask ourselves: where does it originate? And the answer is that compassion flows from the very heart of God. It is the definition of the heart of Christ.

The compassion of God...it is the very basis of our existence, our redemption, our survival. Understanding this, we should look into our own hearts and see whether something of that nature has been imparted to us by the Holy Spirit. Put in the simplest terms: if I have tasted compassion, am I disseminating it ?

Compassion is action motivated by the understanding that God's concern for me is the sole reason I exist and survive. Therefore, I want to show compassion to people around me and give of myself to them. Motivated by God's compassion on my behalf, I long to meet others at their point of need, in Jesus' name. I want to be the means of an answer. True compassion requires the active expression of help.

But how is it going to work out in our lives? As we study the life of Christ, we find that he goes far beyond the dos and don'ts and gives us both the inspiration and the tools of abundant living. In the Christian walk we learn how to love and pray and believe and forgive and to overcome. We learn that living is not reciting beliefs for all to hear nor is it the mere performing of ritual; rather, there is a life to be lived. That life is the heart of Christ beating within us. It is truly giving your heart to the Lord.

When this happens, your heart becomes the avenue where the soft winds of sympathy blow; your heart is where friendliness blooms; your heart is where the laugh of love is heard. Your heart is your spirit and attitude which are holy and strengthened by Christ (I Thess. 3:12-13).

There is no question that believers are expected to live in this world as Jesus did. Our lives, values, behavior, attitudes, choices, even feelings, are to be in a deep and real way His. In order for the church (a living organism) to carry out its external function, it must be internally healthy. That means the heart of Christ must beat and pump life in the body. The heart of Christ in the church is summed up in one word–compassion. Numerous passages in the New Testament describe Jesus looking upon people with compassion.

On one occasion, Jesus saw the people

wandering aimlessly like sheep without a shepherd. He knew that their society was disintegrating. He saw that they were physically hungry and that many were sick among them. What was His reaction? He was moved with compassion. Our Lord Jesus began to reach out to people. He healed the ill, fed the hungry, redeemed the lost. He spoke to their broken society. He gave of Himself to them. He became compassion in action. Having modeled compassion, Jesus gathered His disciples around Him and repeatedly taught them about compassion. One such lesson was the parable of the unmerciful servant, recorded in Matthew eighteen. The story is of a man who owed his superior a lot of money, but didn't have the funds to repay the debt. So he fell down before his superior and begged for compassion. The superior mercifully forgave him and wiped the ledger clean. Relieved of the heavy debt, the forgiven man left the house and promptly bumped into his friend, whom he grabbed by the throat and demanded, "pay me what you owe me." Even though he had been forgiven a debt 64,000 times greater, he himself was unwilling to forgive. Jesus said in effect, "that is totally unacceptable behavior. Those who have benefited from the compassion of God ought to begin to discover a compassionate spirit within themselves."

Jesus never taught a parable about a "good" Samaritan, but he did teach about a compassionate one. This parable can only be understood in light of its context (Luke 10:25-37). The context deals with the compassion of a man; his actions. This compassionate man did not stop with simple prevention of death; he took steps to restore a sense of health and well-being to the wounded man. Seating the man on his own donkey, he walked the remaining miles to Jericho and then cared for the man through the night. When morning came, he gave the innkeeper funds to cover extra room and board and watchful care. He did all of this without any expectation of repayment.

Jesus then challenged the lawyer in the story to, "Go and do likewise." Jesus has slightly but profoundly changed the lawyer's question. The lawyer asked, "who is my neighbor?" His question focused attention on others and asked whether they fit into the category of those he was obligated to love. However, Jesus asked, "Who was a neighbor?" In other words, "Who behaved with compassion as God would have a neighbor behave?" Jesus focuses attention on ourselves and asks whether we have a heart to serve with compassion.

The greatest wonder of all is that Jesus Himself walks the world in His people. In us Jesus speaks the Good News. In us Jesus clothes the fatherless and feeds the hungry. In us Jesus brings hope to the hopeless. In us Jesus reveals the Father and brings glory to God. In us Jesus reveals a positive and attractive holiness that exposes the darkness of sin. In us Jesus' reconciling touch is felt wherever there is division and pain. In our flesh our Lord Jesus takes contemporary shape and form. This is the heart of Christ in the church.

There is one fundamental truth that often escapes us. It is only by being interested in others that we are interesting to others.

Ron Adams serves the Longcreek church in Columbia, SC. You can write to him at 720 Longtown Rd., Columbia, SC 29223.

The Mind of Christ

ALAN WATSON

The "mind of Christ" is summed up in one word: humility. This word has a unique historical background in the New Testament. Discovering how this word came into Biblical usage will help us understand the concept of the "mind of Christ."

Occasionally the writers of the New Testament borrowed Greek words and used them in a new way, a new context, giving them a uniquely Christian flavor. The inspired writers of the New Testament often used words in this way to convey Christian principles.

For example, in Matthew 11:29 Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls." The word we translate "humble" is from the classical Greek word "Tapeinos." This word was used in a unique way by New Testament writers. They took a common, well known word and used it in a new context to describe a great truth found in Christianity.

The word "tapeinos" originally meant, "Bad in a degrading sense," "Lowliness or baseness of character," (*An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, W.E. Vine.) In our English language we might say, "That's disgusting, beneath us or of no count." You were not being praised if someone described you in terms of "tapeinos."

> "When we become humble, when we consider ourselves so lowly, base and abject that we are nothing, then there will be unity."

Matthew and other New Testament writers took that very same Greek word and used it in a Christian context. Matthew 11:29 literally reads, "For I am gentle and 'tapeinos' in heart." Of course, Jesus was not bad or base, but the word was used to describe absolute, total humility. There is not even a hint of pride, arrogance or selfishness in Jesus Christ. His life, heart and mind was so devoid of these things that He could only be described by the word "tapeinos." Jesus allowed Himself to be humiliated and debased rather than seeking dominion and control. Thesame word is also found in Matthew 18:4, Luke 3:5 and 14:11.

Using this concept, the New Testament writers actually created a new word by combining "tapeinos" (abject, lowly) with "phren" (the mind or cognitive faculties) and the result was, "tapeinophrosune" or "lowliness of mind" (used in Acts 20:19; Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:3; Col. 2:18 and I Pet. 5:5) This word is unique in the pages of the New Testament and it was used to describe true Christian humility. In our study, Paul used this new word when he said, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in lowliness of mind (*tapeinophrosune*) consider others better than yourselves" (2:3) He also used the word "tapeinos" in verse 8, "And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled (*tapeinos*) himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross."

We know from Philippians 4:2-3 that within the Philippian church there was some degree of conflict. Paul described a situation in which two women were involved in some type of dispute. It was serious enough that Paul addressed these women by name and then asked the congregation to assist them in finding a peaceful solution. Paul knew that any conflict in the church, even if it involves just two people, can escalate into a major problem, perhaps even creating a serious division in the whole body.

Conflict in the church is always a major problem for elders, ministers and members. Most church conflicts are not rooted in doctrinal issues. Someone is displeased with the kind of songs we sing. Another is upset about the budget. Two members are arguing over the best way to repair the parking lot. Someone else is upset with the noise during worship. It is usually rare to find a church problem with roots in a doctrinal issue. Since the Restoration Movement began, we have solidified our "doctrines" and have not tolerated deviation. When a doctrinal issue does surface, we have the Scriptures to define and instruct us in truth. Even in Philippians, the issue was not doctrine. If one of these women had been teaching false doctrine, the apostle would have addressed the error and instructed her in truth. Doctrinal conflicts are often easier to resolve because we rely on the New Testament for guidance. But what happens when a church is divided by opinion, preferences and traditions? How do we bring together a body of people, with different personalities, different needs, different preferences and make them all one? The answer is, "tapeinos."

Jesus Christ was described by this word. Here was the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the King of kings being described by a word generally used in a degrading and insulting context. He made the choice to become flesh. He humiliated, humbled and insulted Himself, leaving the palaces of Heaven and the security of spiritual realms. He emptied Himself by becoming human and therefore became "tapeinos." This is the mind of Christ.

The apostle Paul gave these Philippians more than advice. He gave them a tool, a method, in which they could be united and be one. He held Jesus before them and said, "Here's the way to unity and peace, it's called 'tapienos'." Just as Jesus was willing to accept the lowly, base, derogatory form of flesh, we need to have that same mind. When we become humble, when we consider ourselves so lowly, base and abject that we are nothing, then there will be unity. It is no longer *our* will that's important. It is no longer *our* preferences and *our* desires that matter. "I am nothing. My opinions, my ideas and my wants don't really matter. I am lowly and abject compared to others." This is the mind of Christ.

Can you imagine the impact on our churches if we practiced the concept of "tapeinos," if we truly possessed the mind of Christ? When it comes to the word of God, the doctrinal truths that cannot change, we hold firm and cannot bend. But when it comes to the preferences, opinions andvarious human traditions we personally find comfortable, we are nothing. Where will the conflicts be when we all accept the mind of Christ? Where will the divisions be when we all decide that our preferences are "lowly and debase" compared to the preferences of others? The mind of Christ is the answer to our divisions and factions. Unity and love can be accomplished. Congregations need never again divide and splinter. It can happen when every Christian accepts the mind of Christ and lives a life that can only be described by one word, "tapeinos."

Alan Watson serves as the preacher for the Clemson church. He may be contacted at PO Box 333, Clemson, SC 29633.

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The Spirit of Christ

Craig Hinrichs

When we became Christians we received the Spirit of God to dwell in us. At that time we were added by the Lord to His church where He dwells in the Spirit (Acts 2:38-47, Eph. 2:22). As we participate in this body as the Lord designed and instructed in His word, we grow with a growth which is from God (Col. 2:19). We are enlivened, empowered, and transformed by His Spirit so the purpose of God to conform us individually and corporately into the image of Christ is accomplished (Rom. 8; Eph. 4:11-16).

Warnings abound concerning the possibility of being led astray in our lives by listening to spirits that are not of God with the consequence of losing our connection with the Spirit's transforming and life-giving power (see I John 4:1-6; Col. 2; Rom. 8). Staying on this road will ultimately cost us our salvation.

Notice from Luke 9:51-56 that even men who were physically with Christ manifested a spirit that was not of Christ. From this same passage we can get some guidelines to assure us that we are walking according to the Spirit of Christ, thereby receiving His saving, transforming, life-giving power.

First, we need a clear sense of mission from God. While Jesus did many good things for people, His ultimate mission was to enable the salvation of humanity by dying for their sins and being raised to be their high priest in heaven. Likewise, while we may do good works individually and corporately as disciples, our principal mission is to participate with Christ in His work to save humanity from its sin. Our place in His plan is to preach the gospel to the lost and teach those that are baptized to observe all that He commanded (Mark 16:16 and Matt. 28:20). These verses clearly define the personal mission of every disciple of Jesus Christ. We cannot walk by His Spirit if we neglect these instructions from His very mouth.

Second, we must be willing to pay whatever personal price necessary to do God's work. Jesus "resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem" where He would be murdered in order to accomplish God's plan. We must set our face to go to our own Jerusalem for God if we are to follow the Spirit of Christ. We do not know the particulars of what the future holds in our personal service to Christ. What we must do is to give up our dreams, hopes, and aspirations for this life and accept the will of God for our lives...whatever that may be. Read carefully Jesus' words in

Matthew 16:24-26, and Luke 14:25-35. Realize, also, that we must not let what God's doing in another disciple's life affect our attitude toward the service He has for us (see John 21:18-23).

Third, we must be ready for opposition and misunderstanding as we live out the will of God in our lives. Notice in Luke 9:51-56 that the Samaritans did not receive Jesus because His face was set toward Jerusalem. Also, His disciples showed that they did not understand the nature of the Spirit of the one whom they followed. They desired to destroy the Samaritans. Jesus came to save them. We should expect the same kind of opposition and misunderstanding in our discipleship. Jesus warned that such may extend even into our own home and family (Matt. 10:34-36). In verses 37-39 he shows how important it is to rigorously keep our

The Eyes of Christ

Ernie Thigpen

It all depends on how we look at it. When the other person takes a long time, she's slow. When we take a long time, we're thorough. When the other fellow doesn't get it done, he's lazy. But when we don't get it done, we're busy. When the other person does something without being told she's overstepping her bounds. When we do it, we're showing initiative. When the other fellow overlooks rules of etiquette, he's rude. When we skip a few rules, we're original. When the other person pleases the boss, she's an apple polisher. When we please the boss, we're cooperating. When others get ahead, they just got lucky. But when we manage to get ahead, that's the just reward for all our hard work.

Our physical eyes are precious to us. We spend time, money, and energy to protect them. Forced to choose a sense to give up, sight would be last for most of us. We give special care to our physical eyes. But more important than our physical eyes is the way we see things. The attitude behind what we see and how we see it colors and even controls our lives. It's not what we see so much as how we look at what we see. It really does all depends on how we look at it.

God's word uses eyesight as a symbol for spiritual insight and the discernment of eternal truths. "Open my eyes," the psalmists pleads, "that I may see wonderful things in your law" (Ps. 119:18). The lukewarm Laodiceans were counseled to buy "salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see" (Rev. 3:18). And our Lord taught "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the

---

priorities straight in heart-wrenching times such as these. To manifest His Spirit is to remember and to act consistently with the desire to save those that oppose and misunderstand us. To cave in to the flesh is to reject the call of the Spirit and cut ourselves off from His power, with all that implies.

Fourth, we must keep moving in pursuit of our mission no matter what obstacles we encounter. Jesus, undaunted by the opposition and misunderstanding, simply went to another village en route to Jerusalem. We must have this same spirit.

Disciples who are led by the Spirit are also empowered by that same indwelling Spirit to endure anything that they encounter (Col. 1:11). As we obey the instructions of the Spirit in the word of God, we are assured that God is at work in us to change us into what He wants us to be (Phil. 2:12-13).

We can also be assured of the answers to the prayers recorded in Hebrews 13:20-21 and Ephesians 3:14-21. "Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."

Craig Hinrichs preaches for the Winnsboro church of Christ, which he established in his home in 1978. He may be contacted at 211 W. Washington St., Winnsboro, SC 29180.

darkness!" Jesus is discussing 20/20 vision, but it's discerning spiritual eyesight that He desires for us.

VISION PROBLEMS

You will probably have some vision problems in your lifetime. Sometimes these will come from injury or illness, but usually declining sight comes with age. You begin to notice that the signs onthe highway aren't as easy to read anymore and the leaves on trees seem to clump together in a mass. Or, for you, it's those tiny words on the page that are now only legible at arm's length.

NEARSIGHTEDNESS

Twenty to thirty per cent of all people with eye problems are said to be nearsighted. In the spiritual realm, the percentage of nearsightedness may be greater. Spiritually nearsighted people lack the ability to see beyond the moment. Esau lost sight of his birthright, trading it for broth he saw on the fire. David saw Bathsheba in the bath, but didn't see the trouble in the bubbles. The rich, young ruler viewed his possessions, which were temporary, as more valuable than the life Jesus portrayed, which was eternal. Peter sought delivery through denial only to be devastated when He realized that Jesus saw his deadly deed.

When we are spiritually nearsighted we live only for today. We love only the things that are within our grasp at the moment. We look only at what happens right now. We are effected by what is happening to us in the present; unable to look back into and learn from the past or to look into the future and see precious sights ahead in Christ. All we see is now. If today is a good day, we're up. If today is a bad day, we're down. We act according to our feelings at the minute. We can't see a world of hurting people out there because our sight is clouded by the hurt in here.

Nearsightedness makes us very selfish. We are unable to make long-term commitments. We say for better or worse, until death do us part. What we actually mean is for better or worse, etc., or until our feelings change. On that day, we will see ourselves and will see our unhappiness and we will see the only hope of relief as escape from the relationship, the job, the church, or even our commitment to the LORD and to our neighbors. That's how we see it when we are nearsighted. Jesus was not nearsighted. He saw the needs of others. "When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36). He saw little children turned away from Him, but He reached out to them, took them in His arms and blessed them (Mark 10:14ff). He saw a paralyzed man let down through a hole in a roof and forgave his sins and healed him (Matt. 9:2). He saw a worshipping woman crippled for 18 years and healed her, freeing her to worship without pain (Luke 13). He saw friends grieving at a relatives' tomb and He grieved with them (John 11). He saw His mother at the scene of His death and He provided for her (John 19).

Jesus sought to correct the nearsighted vision of those around Him. He pledged to His excited disciples they would see greater things than what they saw presently. They would "see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (John 1:51). He promised a future that was problematic, but also promising. "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). And before He left His followers, He encouraged them with these words, "In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19). He vowed, "Be pure and heart and you will see God" (Matt. 5:8). That's the way Jesus looked at it.

FARSIGHTEDNESS

Another eyesight problem is farsightedness, the compulsion to look only to the future. The Proverbs writer teaches, "The discerning person looks to wisdom, but the eyes of a fool to the ends of the earth" (Prov. 17:24). Our farsightedness makes us foolish. Our favorite word is "someday." Someday we'll win someone to Christ, someday we'll develop a relationship with our children, someday we'll pursue that dream, someday we'll win the publishers' sweepstakes. We fail to appreciate and seize current opportunities. We look at details as nonessential. We prefer to dream rather than do. We like rainbows, not responsibilities. We are unable to start projects. Wedream about times to come, without ever realizing there's a relationship between what we start today and what we realize and reach tomorrow. Our attitude is to endure the present. Our credo is "Tomorrow will be a greater day than today." We'll be happy when we get married. We'll be happy when we get a better job. We'll be happy when we get our degree. We'll be happy when we are financially secure. We'll be happy when we retire. We're so heavenly minded we are truly no earthly good. Farsighted is how we look at it.

Jesus was not farsighted. He was very interested in the now. He guided His disciples when they could only look down the road, "Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting" (John 4:35). He saw the pressing needs of His current ministry, urging, "We must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4). He also comforted and corrected chronic tomorrow-worriers, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matt. 6:34). That is the way Jesus saw it.

"I-SURGERY"

Chances are we all see life through farsighted or nearsighted eyes. We want to see with the discernment of our Lord and as His body that is the church's challenge. We want to notice what people need and recognize how to aid them in their trouble. So what can we do to correct our vision problems? Jesus recommended eye-surgery. He asks, "How can you say to your neighbor, 'Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye." The eye-surgery we need is "I-surgery." We need to remove the "I" from the focal point of our vision and be like the disciples on Transfiguration Mountain and "see only Jesus, and no other" (Mark 9:8). We must adjust our sight like the Hebrew writer and "Fix our eyes on Jesus" (Heb. 12:2). Then we will be able to view people through the eyes of our Lord, doing "nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves," and looking "not to your own interests, but to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4). That's the way Jesus saw it. It all depends on how we see it.

Ernie Thigpen is the preacher for the Central church in Spartanburg. Contact him at 2052 N. Church St. Place, Spartanburg, SC 29303-2706.

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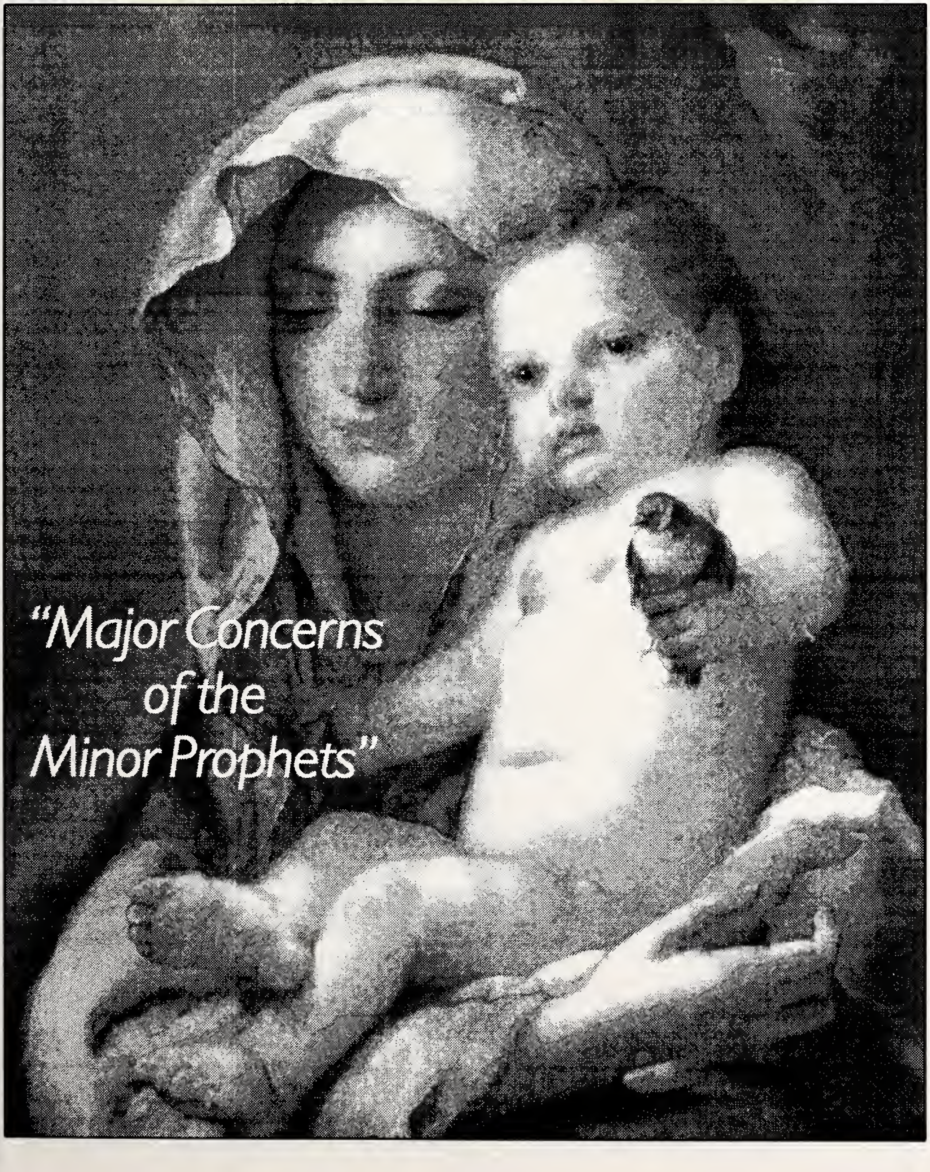

"Major Concerns of the Minor Prophets"

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(ISSN 0008-672X)
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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Rd., Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: Individual–$10/year ($18/2 years and $26/3 years); club of five or more–$9 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles–60¢/copy/month; church mailing list (minimum 15) 75¢/copy/month. Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER:
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with Form 3579 to:

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Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
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Hendersonville, NC 28739
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Address all advertising pertaining to the churches of Christ or its members (including related organization) to the editor.

All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceding month.

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Introduction to the Minor Phophets

PAUL WATSON

The Minor Prophets are anything but "minor." These twelve prophets originally conveyed the urgent messages of God to their respective communities in widely diverse life-situations. By God's grace these messages have been preserved for His people over the centuries and remain fresh and cogent for us today. The questions raised and the issues addressed by the "the Twelve" are questions we still ask and issues we must face ourselves.

How can God in turn be gracious to us, be angry with us, and punish us, without ever abandoning us? Hosea, both by his words and his life, "takes us into the very heart of God" and shows us "the ardent love of a devoted Husband; the tender love of a compassionate Father" (Carol Shoun). Precisely because He cares so deeply for us, God will not accept our worship of Him if that worship is not accompanied by the daily practice of justice and righteousness, as the prophet Amos emphasizes (Don Giles). If God's people adamantly refuse to honor Him with their lives as well as with their lips, both Zephaniah and Amos warn us not to be surprised when "the day of the Lord" breaks over us as a day of judgment (Bob Mason).

We can understand God's imposition of punishment upon His people when they deserve it. We find it much harder to understand why God would allow His enemies to prosper undeservedly, especially at the hands of God's own people. Habakkuk raises this question and bids us wait with him in faith for God's answer (Amos Allen). The matter of establishing right priorities and holding to those priorities is always a challenge, as much for us today as for those Jews who returned to Jerusalem and Judah in the days of Haggai (Peter Rode). Finally, Malachi invites us to test God for ourselves, not by "bargaining with Him to pad our pockets" but by being "willing to trust His promises, willing to give without reservation, only then to enjoy the blessings He has always intended for His children" (Don Utley).

These are but a few of the "major concerns" shared with us by the "minor prophets." A careful, attentive study of "the Twelve" in their entirety will thoroughly refresh us and challenge us. Such a study will also make us grateful for their ministry to us, for they are most assuredly among these "prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours,...serving not themselves but you" (I Peter 1:10,12).

Paul Watson serves the Cole Mill Rd. church of Christ as preacher and elder. He may be contacted at 1617 Cole Mill Rd., Durham, NC 27705.

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Hosea: The Portrait of a Passionate God

CAROL SHOUN

Of all the prophets of ancient Israel, none speaks with more passion than the prophet Hosea. He takes us into the very heart of God where we encounter a depth of emotion that is almost beyond our comprehension. Hosea shows us God's steadfast love for Israel–the ardent love of a devoted Husband; the tender love of a compassionate Father. And Hosea shows us God's heart-wrenching anguish over Israel's unfaithful, rebellious response to that love.

Hosea's ability to communicate God's message so earnestly springs from the life experience to which God called him: "When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, 'Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty in departing from the LORD' " (2:2). Hosea's own life thus becomes a mirror image of his prophecy, lending a piercing authenticity to his words.

Hosea's ministry spanned the last twenty-five years of Israel's existence as a state, before her capital city of Samaria fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC. During this quarter century of fatal decline,her political system, a monarchy for which she had asked, increasingly forgot God.

In addition, Israel departed from the pure worship of the one holy God. She confused God with Baal and added a number of the rituals of Baal-worship to her worship of God, many of which were sexual in nature. God says of Israel, "She is not my wife, and I am not her husband...She said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink.'...She has acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wind and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold–which they used for Baal" (2:2b, 5b, 8).

God therefore separates Himself from His people who had turned away from Him. He vows, "I will take away my grain when it ripens, and my new wine when it is ready. I will take back my wood and my linen, intended to cover her nakedness...I will ruin her vines and her fig trees, which she said were her pay from her lovers...I will punish her for the days she burned incense to the Baals; she decked herself with rings and jewelry, and went after her lovers, but me she forgot" (2:9, 12-13).

God's anger and sense of betrayal are indisputable, but yet His love is unwavering. Throughout Israel's unfaithfulness, His foremost desire is for reconciliation. We perhaps feel a little embarrassed at God's undisguised desire to win her back: "Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope" (2:14-15a).

Why would a God of infinite power and majesty concern Himself with wooing a people of such persistent disloyalty and faithlessness? Because, as He later affirms Himself, "I am God, and not man–the Holy One among you (11:9). God, while capable of experiencing the full range of emotions as we know them, is not limited as we are by the boundaries of humanness. He feels and loves perfectly. So He continues, "I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD. In that day I will respond," declares the LORD..."I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.' I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God' " (2:19-21a, 23).

Hosea next turns to another facet of God's character: His justice. "Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites," he says, "because the LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: 'There is no faithfulness, no love, no knowledge of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed' " (4:1-2). A just God cannot close His eyes to sin. Sin demands punishment. "What can I do with you, Ephraim?" he asks. "What can I do with you Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears. Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth; my judgments flashed like lightning upon you" (6:4-5).

Later we hear God's anguish: "I long to redeem them but they speak lies against me" (7:13b). God's desire to rescue His people is profound, but He will not–cannot–redeem a people who refuse to acknowledge Him. He charges, "Israel cries out to me, 'O our God, we know you!' But Israel has rejected what is good; an enemy will pursue him" (8:2-3).

Finally, Hosea shows us God as a loving Father. With poignant tenderness God recalls, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son...It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed 0them" (11:1, 3-4). God's heart is pierced by Israel's determined refusal to repent. Yet He says, "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel?...My heart is changed within me, all my compassion is aroused" (11:8). God the compassionate Father cannot bear to punish His beloved child–but at the same time, God, perfect in justice and love, cannot bear *not*to.

Israel could not escape destruction or be spared pain and grief. God *would* punish her. Listen to His pronouncement. "I will come upon them like a lion, like a leopard I will lurk by the path. Like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will attack them and rip them open. Like a lion I will devour them; a wild animal will tear them apart" (13:7-8). God would execute justice, but His judgment would not mean annihilation. Beyond that terrible moment would come redemption and renewal. he says, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death"(13:14a).

How could Israel claim this redemption? What ultimate act of penance could make up for her grievous sins? God asks for only one thing: "Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him; 'Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips' " (14:4a).

This God who absolutely would not stand for Israel's sin, yet who would also forgive and restore those whom he had punished, is the very same God known and proclaimed by Jesus Christ. Jesus speaks of God's uncompromising demand for loyalty this way, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). He speaks of God's forgiving, redeeming love as He says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Through both his words and his life, Hosea opens the door for us to this same God.

Carol Shoun worships with the Cole Mill Rd. church in Durham, NC. You may reach her care of the church at 1617 Cole Mill Rd., Durham, NC 27705.

Your Life and Your Worship:

Don Giles

In the movie *Leap of Faith*, we meet Jonas Nightingale. Jonas has led a tough life: abandoned as a child and raised in a neglectful orphanage, he ran away at age fifteen to a life of crime and drugs. Now Jonas is a traveling preacher. He looks good, is eloquent in speech; he knows people and how to inspire them. It would be a marvelous story of a changed man if only there were any faith underlying his doings, but there is not. His "ministry" is a facade—just another way to dupe people. He's a con-man. The people who attend his "revivals" are the marks; their faith is a commodity to exploit. He could not care less about the consequences; in fact, he is self-justifying: "I give people a good show, lots of music, some good sentiments, and they go home with a little more hope than they had when they came." Jonas looks righteous and puts on a good service (the content of which would take at least another article to examine), but his life shows no sign of the "faithfulness" that he displays in his "ministry."

Jonas' conscience seems untouchable until he meets Boyd, a teenager crippled in an accident that killed his parents. Boyd has been to the doctors, who can't help. He's been to one healing preacher, who told him that his faith wasn't strong enough. Now Boyd has nothing left but his faith. He believes that he will walk if it is God's will.

In hope of getting close to Boyd's attractive sister, Jonas strikes up a friendship with Boyd. Boyd tells Jonas that his sister thinks he's a fake. Jonas has a ready response: "Maybe I am, maybe I'm not. If I get the job done, what difference does it make?" His words will later haunt him as he comes to see the genuineness of Boyd's faith. In spite of Jonas' best efforts to avoid it, Boyd finally makes it forward for a healing—one Jonas knows he can't really deliver. In a shock to Jonas, Boyd walks. Later, Boyd comes to talk to Jonas about his part in the miracle. Jonas confesses that it's all a show—smoke and mirrors—and that it's for the suckers; but Boyd, he's the real deal, the genuine article. "Are you saying you think you're a fake?" Boyd asks. "I know I'm a fake," Jonas replies. Boyd reminds him of his words, "What's the difference as long as youget the job done?" Jonas now understands: "Kid, it makes all the difference in the world." It makes a difference if your faith is real; it matters if what you do in worship has an impact on your life.

Most are not as deliberate in their sanctimony as Jonas; many don't even consciously consider their hypocrisy. We may fail to recognize such inconsistency, but ignorance is not bliss. A holy God cannot abide such feigned devotion: "I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:21-24).

One would be hard-pressed to find a passage in all of scripture that more bluntly expresses God's divine disgust: "I hate...I despise...I cannot stand... I will not accept...I will have no regard for...Away with the noise...I will not listen." God's reproach runs the gamut of the Israelites' worship, from their sacred feasts and

A Square Peg in a Round Hole?

solemn assemblies, to the sacrifices they offered, to their singing and music. God's rejection is utterly complete. Why is God so angry? Why does the weight of His contempt fall on His people's worship? Did they not adequately plan their worship time? Scrimp on the sacrifices? Not attend regularly? Where did these people fail?

To the causal observer, nothing appeared wrong about these people's worship. Their religion was a big deal to them. They were careful to perform all their duties, to attend every time the temple doors were open. They were unsparing in their sacrifices; exuberant in their music and song. These people enjoyed religion that appeared to be genuine. They found it satisfying, and thought it to be acceptable to God.

So where did they err? Verse twenty-four brings to light their omission: "But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" The missing elements were justice and righteousness. Righteousness is the free and faithful fulfillment of a person's covenant responsibilities both to God and to neighbor. Justice is the application of righteousness in the legal sphere. Both are to flow together like a mighty, unending river through the community of God's people. Israel's practice of religion did not shape the practices of their daily lives. The worship of a just and righteous God was not resulting in the translation of these characteristics to the worshippers. Their worship was not confirmed in their lives; herein was their failure. God, through Amos, was calling His people to lives that are evidence of the truth and sincerity of their worship.

This passage is one of many in scripture that seeks to address the relationship between worship and ethics. Worship–our reply, either corporately or individually, of adoration and devotion to the God who first loved us. Ethics–the standards that govern the living of our lives; indeed, by one definition, the very way in which we lead our lives. God makes clear His expectation that a congruency exist between our worship and our ethics. Does this mean that worship is centered on us—that we worship for our betterment as people? No, worship is not a Dale Carnegie seminar. God is unquestionably to be the focal point of worship. This fact in no way diminishes the relationship that should exist between worship and ethics. If justice and righteousness are of God, is it not legitimate to expect our focus on God in worship to lead us to justice and righteousness?

Can we truly worship the God of mercy and grace and remain ruthless in our dealings with others? Can we worship a God who is always faithful and be unfaithful in our relationships? Can we say we adore the Christ who associated with the sinners and the outcasts and touched lepers, and yet ourselves shun the untouchables of our society? Can we claim to have the Spirit within us yet exhibit none of His fruits? If worship does not produce justice and righteousness, isn't it reasonable to question whether we, in truth, focused on God in our worship?

During my college years, I went on several mission trips to Jamaica. There are many things about the island that one comes to expect: a standard of living that places the idea of a "poor, starving college student" in proper perspective; drives that would take twenty minutes in the states that take two hours in Jamaica; people, allegedly speaking English, who seem to be speaking another language. Some issues one may come to expect, but cannot accept. One of these is the high incidence of people living together without the benefit of marriage. For many reasons, it has become a social norm for couples in Jamaica not to marry. This is a major issue the church deals with in spreading the gospel in Jamaica.

On one trip, we met a woman who had studied with a few of our group members and attended the nightly tent meeting held during the campaign. One afternoon she came stating her desire to be baptized in obedience to the gospel. While this was welcome news, there was one topic we knew must be addressed: she "had a man." When asked, she said that she had already addressed this issue. The previous evening she had told her man that she was going to become a Christian, and that meant he had to go and not return until they were married. Upon further inquiry she explained that if repentance means change, then that was what she had to do with everything in her life that wasn't in harmony with God's ways. She couldn't truly worship God if she wouldn't truly live a changed life.

Do our times of worship have any impact on the way we lead our lives the rest of the week? Traditionally, and arguably without much reflection, we have answered this question with a resounding "yes!" The affirmative answer is appropriate; but do we take that to heart or is it merely an abstraction? Are we answering the question "*Should* our worship affect the way we lead our lives?" If so, then a quick answer is legitimate. If, however, the question is "*Does* our worship affect our ethics?" then the answer demands reflection. You cannot respond with integrity unless you evaluate your life. Will you always find that your life measures up? Of course not—we are, after all, a fallen people. Does this mean that we can't worship? No. We must remain aware that it is only through God's grace that any of us enter into His presence. God knows that we will fail at times; but that does not mean that He should lower the standard. Today, as in the days of Amos, God calls us, His people, to make evident the truth of our worship in the abundance of the justice and righteousness that rolls forth with ever-increasing measure as we seek to be like Him.

Don presently serves as minister to the youth of the Cole Mill Rd. church in Durham, NC. You may contact him at 1617 Cole Mill Rd., Durham, NC 27705.

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The Day of the Lord

Bob Mason

Modern-day "prophets" are prone to look at the earthquakes, disasters, crime, hate, and wars of our times and quickly conclude that judgment day is near. Why? They answer that man is evil in his heart and has abandoned God, whose wrath will rain down. "When will this happen?" they ask. "Is this the end of the world?"

Many "day of the Lord" passages in the New Testament refer to the great and final day of the world. Peter describes the heavens passing away with a great noise and the elements melting with a fervent heat. But as to the time, Peter says, "As a thief in the night . . ." (2 Pet. 3:10).

The minor prophets revealed a "day of the Lord" as well, but it was one that would not wait for judgment day. Destruction and captivity by invading nations were brought on by corruption, immorality, unfaithfulness, and injustice. As idolatry gripped God's own people and held them fast, God's heart broke. The wrath of God was coming in the near future, not at the end of time. Just as in Matthew 24, when Jesus told those in Judea at the onset of the desolating sacrilege to flee to the mountains, the warning did not concern the end of the world, but the here and now.

The first words of Zephaniah must have chilled any listener with an ear toward God. "'I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth,' says the Lord" (Zeph. 1:2). Zephaniah, like the other minor prophets, pinpointed the reason for the judgment to come. He indicted "Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (1:4) for their sins. Putting a name on them, he also described their sin: "idolatrous priests" as well as "those who bow down and swear to the Lord and yet swear by Milcom; those who have turned back from following the Lord, who do not seek the Lord or inquire of him" (Zeph. 1:4—6). Clearly, God was pointing the finger of warning at His own people.

How poorly these people remembered the days of Amos! Israel had been looking for this "day of the Lord" to take away their enemies and leave them in peace, but Amos had given them only bad news: "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness and not light" (Amos 5:18).

In fact, Syria had carried these ten northern tribes of Israel off into captivity, never to return. Surely, after this calamity, Judah could see the handwriting on the wall and hear the clear warnings of Zephaniah. Surely, they would repent; yet sadly, they did not.

The words of the minor prophets came to pass. The "day of the Lord" for the Northern tribes came upon them in 722 BC at the hand of Sargon II, king of Assyria. The "day of the Lord" for Judah occurred in 586 BC through Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. For the Jews after Jesus, it was in AD 70, with the destruction of Jerusalem.

Could we have a "day of the Lord" in our future? Certainly, the end will come when the Lord comes upon the clouds—a great and glorious day (1 Thess. 4:16—17). But between now and then—yes, unrighteousness and disregard for the Lord could bring judgment upon any people or nation. Our lives and faith should reflect that we have walked with Amos and Zephaniah; that we understand their message and are closer to the Lord for it.

Bob Mason preaches for the Aberdeen church of Christ. You may reach him at PO Box 1176, Aberdeen, NC 28315.

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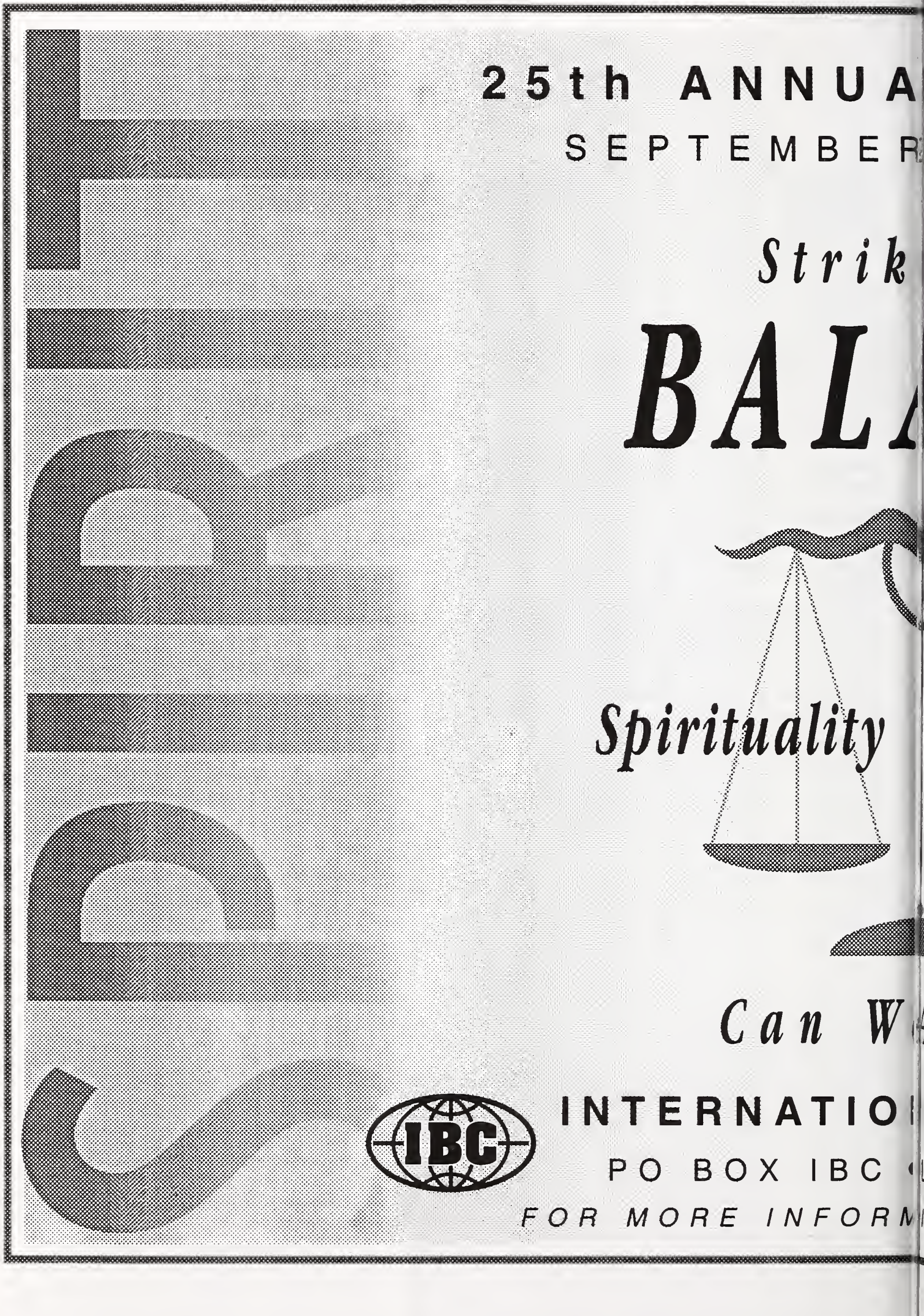

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When Good Things Happen to Bad People:

AMOS ALLEN

Question: If you have ten presidential candidates lined up on the bottom of the ocean, what do you have? Answer: A good start. This may well be how Habakkuk felt when the subject of the Babylonians (Chaldeans) came up.

The Northern Kingdom has fallen (722 BC), and the Egyptians have control of Judah.

Jehoiakim is the king, but a cruel and oppressive one. Habakkuk wants God to do something about this intolerable situation in the Southern Kingdom.

Habakkuk's immediate concern is the sinfulness of Judah. As a man of God, he is distressed at the violence and discord found throughout the nation. Justice is a joke, leaving the righteous powerless and at the mercy of the wicked. The Lord gets an earful about this situation: "How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?" (1:1).

Yahweh answers, but warns Habakkuk that the answer is utterly shocking: God plans to correct the situation in Judah by means of the Babylonians.

The prophet is not only shocked, he is respectfully incredulous. Maybe Habakkuk addresses God as immortal, holy, and pure (2:12, 13) to remind Him of who He is. This man knows his place, but he seriously

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questions God's "outrageous" judgment. Doesn't He know the Babylonians are evil with a capital "E"? Is God aware that this army destroys whole nations, not content to simply defeat the opposing warriors? Would Jehovah allow a merciless, idolatrous nation to have its way with Israel (who is surely more righteous than Babylon)? Why is this good thing (successful conquest) happening to these bad Babylonians?

Notice that Habakkuk does the opposite of what we usually expect from prophets. Instead of speaking to people on behalf of God, he is talking to God on behalf of the people: "God, we have some legitimate gripes, and we demand some answers to this irresponsible behavior. Our rights are about to be violated. You, God, have some explaining to do." Habakkuk informs God that he will stand and wait for an answer (2:1). This is one he does not want to miss. Let's see God explain this. It would appear that Habakkuk thought God would admit He had made a mistake.

We have all seen situations that appeared to be of no value to anyone. Abject poverty, starvation, insanity, overwhelming shame, unbearable suffering, and untimely deaths leave us shaking our heads, wondering what God could have been thinking to allow such. From our viewpoint, God can be needlessly abrupt and harsh. We wonder where all that strength and love are when people are hurting for no apparent reason. And what about those bad people, living it up without a care in the world? When will they get what they really deserve? During the 2600 years between us and Habakkuk, the questions (and the anger) haven't changed much.

Chapter two is God's response to Habakkuk's complaint about the Babylonians' getting away with murder. In verses 2-5, God tells his man to make the prophecy very plain to the people. Then He assures him that it will come true; Habakkuk must learn to wait. Finally, Yahweh tells our spokesman how to wait: faithfully. God says, "When you can't see a good reason why some tragedy has occurred, remain obedient. When you fail to comprehend what I AM is doing in certain situations, trust me." It would appear that we are allowed to ask and even complain, but God still requires faithfulness.

The last part of chapter two continues God's answer to Habakkuk about the wickedness of the Babylonians. Their sins and ultimate destruction are detailed in five "woe" sections (2:6-8, 9-11, 12-14 15-17, 18-20). The sins that doom them are thievery, exploitation, violence, debauchery, and idolatry. All people should know that the "earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord" (2:14), and that empty words are better left unsaid, for "the Lord is in His holy temple" (2:20).

Chapter three is a psalm containing both praise and requests (3:2). God makes an appearance on the earth to wage war with His enemies. He will not let the wicked go unpunished. Theophanies (appearances by God) usually cause great havoc in nature. Mountains crumble, oceans boil, and heavenly bodies fear to move. Habakkuk pictures the earth as being in turmoil when God comes to do battle.

The enemies of God are seen as rivers and mountains over which He has complete control. His anger and revenge will be overwhelming; there will be no doubt as to what God thinks of the Babylonians. Even though this is something the Israelites have wanted to see, they will be struck with fear and trembling. The severity of God's punishment will be unsettling to those who witness it.

Verses 17-19 are some of the most determined words in the Bible. The challenge and the call to faithfulness have been given in 2:4. Habakkuk responds with these words: "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails

and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights."

In 1984 Kenya suffered a terrible drought, as did much of East Africa. For a people who depend on crops and cattle for food and economic security, drought is their worst nightmare. Women walked far and wide to find water while men searched desperately for something to feed the livestock. Families stood around their cows to keep them from falling and dying.

Picture your cupboards totally empty of food, your driveway without any vehicle, and your job opportunities as being nonexistent. How would you respond? With rejoicing or with anger? Joyfully or bitterly? We, like Habakkuk, despair at the harshness of life. Injustices, real or imagined, abound. There is no shortage of bullies, sickness, unfair situations, and imperfect people. Tragedies are dime a dozen in this broken world. Is life fair? We laugh to keep from crying. Our best efforts are but so much dust in the wind. And while the good people are trying their hardest, the wicked are having all the fun and enjoying life to the fullest. They never suffer, experience loss, or run out of money.

Yet even as we say this, we realize that it is not true. God does punish the wicked; their sins do find them out, and a fool is caught in his own trap. God shows Habakkuk (and us) that He is aware and in control. What we see is not the whole picture. God's ways are not easily discerned. Let us be careful in our hasty judgments.

Those of us who consider ourselves "righteous" are to obey regardless of the circumstances. We are called to trust even when the situation appears hopeless. Maybe true faith is best developed in the darkest hours. When there is nothing else to depend on, God is there, securing our footsteps, leading us to greater levels of joy and understanding.

Amos Allen, a former missionary to Kenya for eleven years, now preaches for the Meadowbrook Rd. church in Asheboro, NC. He may be contacted at 631 Meadowbrook Rd., Asheboro, NC 27203.

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25th North Carolina Evangelism Seminar

Eddie Woodhouse

Sponsored by the Brooks Ave. church in Raleigh, the 25th North Carolina Evangelism Seminar, August 9-11, will explore the question of how we reach a nation of people whose lifestyles are changing so quickly. While corporate downsizing, job changes, and family relocation present problems to those around us, they also present us with opportunities for outreach. Entitled "Community of the Church," there is no registration fee for this year's seminar.

Beginning Friday evening, the seminar will explore the first century church as contrasted to the church of 1996. A one-of-a-kind panel discussion on Saturday will be followed by instructive classes that address a broad range of the needs of our communities. How to deal with grief and depression, how to better handle your finances, learning to share the gospel on-on-one, and developing a solid youth program are just some of the classes you can attend. Exciting family entertainment is scheduled for Saturday night. The seminar concludes Sunday morning with a special early communion service.

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Ed. note: This 25th N.C. Evangelism Seminar represents a genuine milestone in the history of the church in the Carolinas. For two and a half decades the Brooks Ave. church has been provided a great service to the Lord's church by hosting and conducting this program that has always been designed to strengthen and build churches. We strongly encourage all our readers to attend the seminar this year. Our thanks to the Brooks Ave. church of Christ for its leadership in the area of church growth and for its dedication to the cause of Christ.

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Haggai: Misplaced Priorities

(Hag 1:1-15)

Peter Rode

In 538 BC Cyrus, king of Babylon, issued a decree that resulted in the return of about 50,000 Jews to Judah to rebuild the house of the Lord in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:2-4; 2:64-65). After completing the foundation some two years later, the Jews suspended further work on the temple for sixteen years (c. 520 BC) because of opposition from their neighbors, especially the Samaritans. During this time the people turned to their own interests. They built "paneled" houses for themselves and tried to scratch out a living from the seemingly barren ground. Although struggling, they seemed to be content with their lot, or at the very least, resigned to their situation. They seemed to rationalize the incomplete state of the Temple by thinking, "The time has not yet come for the Lord's house to be built" (Hag. 1:2). It was at this time that Haggai made his entrance onto the stage of history and brought a message from the Lord to his compatriots in order to motivate them to continue the task they had left unfinished.

Haggai's prophetic message was built on the contrast of "these people say..." and "the Lord Almighty says..." The people were at odds with God about who or what came first in their lives, and God had to correct their attitude. Even withholding blessings from the people (1:6) did not get them to see things God's way. God had to spell it out for them: "Give careful thought to yourways..." (1:5, 7). It was only after Zerubbabel, their leader, was encouraged by the word of God that the people were reassured and sufficiently aroused to return to the work of building the Temple of God.

The problem with the Jews was that they had misplaced their priorities. A well-known parable of Jesus about the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21) illustrates this point. It tells of a farmer who was blessed with good crops, and because of his resulting wealth, developed the hedonistic attitude of "Take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry." With this attitude he put himself first, became selfish toward others, and did not consider God in his life at all. At this point the punch line is delivered. God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" The parable teaches that we need to set our priorities straight by understanding that the spiritual side is more important than the physical or material side of life. This is the essence of the message that Haggai delivered to the remnant of Israel (1:1-15).

The lesson we can learn from this piece of history is that first priority must always be given to God. The Jews were struggling, and nothing seemed to be going right for them (1:6, 9). They had put their own interests before God's and were violating the first commandment: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3). Through this commandment God sought absolute sovereignty in His people's lives grounded in His graciousness toward them. In the case of the Israelites, His grace was shown in their deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Ex. 20:2; Deut. 7:7-9). In the case of the New Israel, His grace is displayed through our deliverance from the bondage of sin and death (Rom. 5:8-11; Heb. 2:14-16). The Jews were living in houses while God's house, the Temple, was standing in ruins. This was the Temple which God had accepted and consecrated after Solomon had built it for Him "by putting my Name there" (1 Kgs.

9:3). Not that God needed a house to live in, but its neglect showed that He was not being honored by His people. This remnant, whom Haggai was addressing, had forgotten this principle.

These people did not have a unique problem. As human beings we seem to be very selfish and always want our interests served first. Only after we are happy and satisfied, which rarely happens, will we even consider giving our time or attention to someone else, let alone God! However, God sees things from a different perspective (cf. Isa. 55:8, 9) and continually seeks to correct our point of view. During the Sermon on the Mount, in the context of teaching against worry, Jesus teaches that we are not to run after what we think are the necessities of life such as food and clothing—or, in the case of the Jews in Haggai's day, "paneled houses." Pagans conduct their lives in such fashion because they have no faith in God! Disciples, on the other hand, are to "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33). In his letters the Apostle Paul encourages the disciples to live lives worthy of their "calling" (Eph. 4:1), "the gospel" (Phil. 1:27), and "the Lord" (Col. 1:10). The import of these texts is that Christians must behave in a way that is consistent with the principles of Christ's life. In so doing we will renounce the pagan way of life, and be "transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory" (2 Cor. 3:18).

Christ came to earth to do the will of God (Jno. 4:34). He put whatever interests He might have had to one side so that God's interests might come first. He "made himself nothing...and became obedient to death—even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:7-8). We are to follow Him, the supreme example. As Rubel Shelly writes in his book *Written in Stone: Ethics of the Heart*, God "must be Lord of all or not Lord at all...Until the issue of this commandment is decided, nothing else aboutlife can be in clear focus."[1] We need to remember that when we became Christians, we confessed Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9, 10; cf. 2 Cor. 4:5); therefore, we need to put Him first in our lives at all times. The principle is succinctly stated by Paul: "For to me, to live is Christ..." (Phil. 1:21).

Peter ministers to the Friendly Ave. church of Christ in Greensboro, NC. You may write to him at 5101 W. Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410.

Brotherhood News

MIKE MOBLEY

VAN BUREN, AR... On April 21 of this year the lives of many church members in the Van Buren area were turned upside down. Tornadoes ripped through the Fort Smith and Van Buren areas leaving behind a path of devastation. Many of our brethren, as well as so many others, lost their homes and possessions. At least two church buildings were destroyed. If you are interested in helping these brethren, you may contact the Pleasant Valley church of Christ at Rt. 1, Kibler Rd., Van Buren, AR 72956, or you may call (501) 474-5866.

MARSHALL, TX... Sojourners, otherwise known as National Evangelism with Sojourners, is a unique organization of primarily retired Christians who love to travel and are committed to helping newand struggling congregations. Their mission is under the oversight of the eldersof the church in Burlington, TX, and their primary goal is reaching those who do not know Christ. If you are interested in learning more, contact the Sojourners at Camp Bee, 5554 Cooks Rd., Marshall, TX 75670.

Putting God to the Test

DON UTLEY

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (Malachi 3:10).

One could come away from this passage arguing that giving to God is good business: God is a banker who assures a good return on our investments. God loves mankind so much that He has furnished a divine vending machine; we insert the money and God guarantees that the thing never gets jammed and always gives us **two** candy bars for the price of one! The Gospel according to Lloyd’s of London.

This verse from the book of Malachi makes two assertions. The first is rather rudimentary: God will bless those who are faithful and generous toward Him. But the second assertion is nothing short of astonishing: God Himself condescends to be *tested* in order to prove it!

Many scriptures affirm that God indeed rewards those who faithfully give as an expression of generosity and covenant loyalty: “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:38). “Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again” (Eccl. 11:1).

Furthermore, God has been willing to be tested on more than one occasion, and indeed has become angry when not taken up on His offer: “Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, ‘Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.’ But Ahaz said, ‘I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test.’ Then Isaiah said, ‘Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also?’ ” (Isa. 7:10-13).

Does Malachi therefore present a timeless invitation to test God’s guaranteed goodness? Not at all. In fact, when read in their larger context, Malachi’s words represent not so much an invitation as a corrective.

“When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. *Do not test the Lord your God . . .*” (Deut. 6:10-12, 16 *emphasis added*). Through these words of Moses, Yahweh warned generations of Israelites against forgetting their Lord—the One who brought them out of the land of Egypt. But they had done just that by the time of Malachi’s prophecy. And their faithlessness did indeed put God to the test.

Malachi is a priest overseeing a difficult case and is thought to have prophesied between 400—450 BC, a time of discouragement and disillusionment for God’s people (3:1). This discouragement led to unfaithfulness on several levels. The temple had been rebuilt and the priesthood had been active long enough for the priests to become bored with their roles (1:13). The

CBC TO CELEBRATE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

In 1956 a group of visionary church leaders met in Statesville, NC, to discuss the need for a Bible camp that would serve the spiritual needs of the youth of the Carolinas. That meeting gave birth to Carolina Bible Camp, and forty years later CBC stands as a powerful testimony to the vision of those who took part in that first meeting as well as the sacrifice and determination of thousands of Christians who have had a part in CBC through the years.

What was once an idea has blossomed into a magnificent reality. Now officially known as Carolina Bible Camp and Retreat Center, Inc., CBC not only conducts seven weeks of camp every summer, but is in constant use throughout the year as its beautiful facility near Mocksville, NC, is also made available to churches and other groups. In addition to church retreats, the facility is also used for singles' retreats, leadership seminars, and the like. As for CBC itself, hundreds of young people over the past forty years have made the decision while at camp to be united with Christ, and thousands more have been motivated to greater service to the Lord because of the influence of the camp. Only God Himself has any real idea of the lives that have been touched in a meaningful way while at camp.

In celebration of forty years of the best in Christian camping, a special anniversary celebration and homecoming is being planned for September 14 at the Carolina Bible Camp and Retreat Center. All who have attended or worked in CBC through the years are invited to be a part of this special celebration. Make your plans now to come home to CBC on September 14. If you would like more information you can call Jack Harris at (919) 876-5810, Wilson Burton at (704) 782-0326, or Dennis Conner at (910) 374-3199.

---

priests at the temple dishonored God (2:1). They accepted blemished and maimed animals forsacrifices, offering to Yahweh things they never would have considered offering their governor (1:8)! The people had forsaken their covenant loyalty by marrying foreign wives (2:12). They had been hoping that after the fall of Babylon and the return of their exiled countrymen, the nation would flourish. But instead, Israel suffered from poor harvests brought on by scant rainfall and swarming locusts (3:10). Therefore, the people had come to doubt the faithfulness and justice of Yahweh: "Where is the God of justice?" (2:17). "How have you loved us?" (1:2). "It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the Lord Almighty?" (3:14). It was this disillusionment that ultimately led the people to shortchange God in their giving of tithes (3:8); it was this abuse of God that particularly led Him to condescend to be tested by His own people.

Given the bleak circumstances that underlie the words of Malachi, the test that God is willing to undergo is not one that a faithful person views opportunistically. This test is not a lighthearted bit of play where Israel is invited to "Pass Go and collect $200." God is willing to show Himself to be faithful despite Israel's utter unfaithfulness. He declares Himself to be testworthy; but ideally, He requires that Israel *not* test Him in light of the demands of Deuteronomy 6. "Testing God" must never be more than simply taking Him at His word.

Today we live in the wake of Israel's unfaithfulness, challenged to learn from their story. We have also been given the example of Jesus who, when confronted with His own brand of temptation, quoted from Deuteronomy: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (Matt. 4:7).

To the extent that "testing God" means bargaining with Him to pad our pockets, the very idea will forever be anathema. But if testing God means that we are willing to trust His promises, willing to give without reservation, *only then* to enjoy the blessings which He has always intended for His children, then let us indeed "bring the whole tithe into the storehouse" and in so doing, forever test His mettle and celebrate His goodness.

Don Utley, who preaches for the North Raleigh church, may be contacted at 8320 Litchford Road, Suite 200, Raleigh NC 27615.

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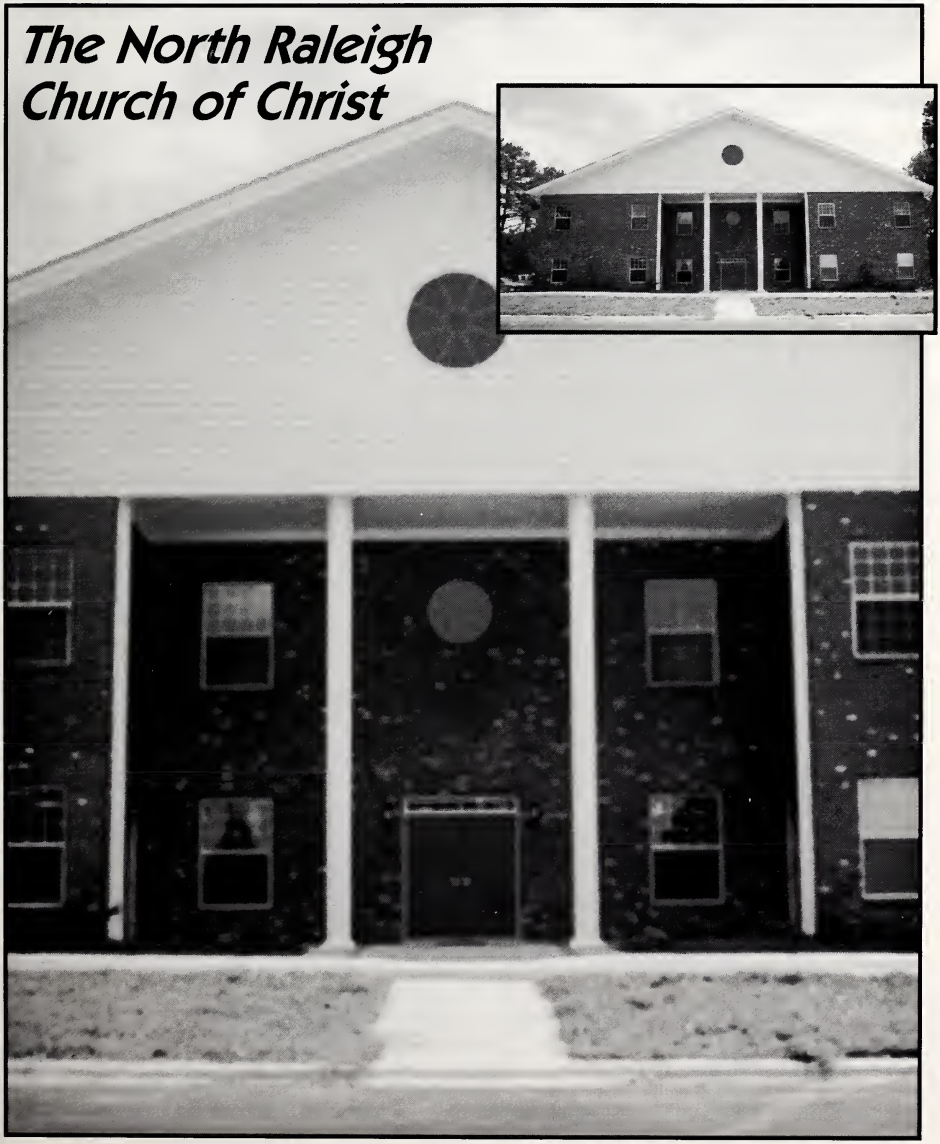

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)

EDITORIAL & PUBLICATION STAFF
Dennis Conner, Editor
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
Jim Mullican, Associate Editor
Michael Mobley, News Editor
Amy Love, Design Editor

CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Rd., Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: Individual–$10/year ($18/2 years and $26/3 years); club of five or more–$9 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles–60¢/copy/month; church mailing list (minimum 15) 75¢/copy/month. Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes
with Form 3579 to:

Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739
Address editorial matter to:
Dennis Conner
PO Box 1369
Yadkinville, NC 27055-1369
Address news items to:
Michael Mobley
301 Reed Creek Rd.
Mooresville, NC 28115

Address commercial advertising
inquiries to:
Jacobs List, Inc.
PO Box 120
Clinton, SC 29325

Address all advertising pertaining to the churches of Christ or its members (including related organization) to the editor.

All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceding month.

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Editorial:

Regarding Spiritual Maturity

DENNIS CONNER

The following thoughts appeared in the September 20, 1992 edition of the bulletin of the West Jefferson church of Christ under the title "How Mature Are You?" I have no idea who originally penned these thoughts on spiritual maturity, but thought our readers might find them helpful. They do provide a pretty challenging and thought provoking standard by which we might measure our own maturity.

"If you can listen to someone criticize you, even unkindly, and receive instruction from it without hard feelings—that is maturity.

If you can see a person do an act which is against your Christian standards and react without self-righteousness—that is maturity.

If you can see work which you began taken from you and given to another, without feeling bitterness—that is maturity.

If you can see others chosen for a job which you are better qualified to do, without feeling resentment—that is maturity.

If you can hear another person argue a point of view which is contrary to your own without a feeling of smugness—that is maturity.

If you can suffer nagging pain and hide your feelings for the sake of others—that is maturity.

If you can go out of your way to help another without feeling you are a pretty good person—that is maturity.

If you can see someone you know well deliberately snub you, and you can make allowances for their action—that is maturity.

If you can crawl out of bed at an early hour to pray, simply because you realize that herein lies your power with God—that is maturity.

If you can be falsely accused, publicly ridiculed, and branded with the transgressors without growing bitter and responding in kind—you have reached true maturity."

CORRECTION

The second paragraph in last month's associate editorial by brother Jim Mullican entitled "Selecting Elders" should have read, "It has no scriptural basis. The New Testament contains no example of elders selecting additional elders or, for that matter, of the elders selecting the deacons," instead of "While it cannot possibly be maintained that such a procedure is against the Scriptures..." The change was the result of some over-zealous editing on my part, for which I apologize to my brother. With regard to the subject of elders, be sure to read this month's associate editorial by brother Mullican and the Carolina Christian Classic Reprint by brother Jim Gardner.

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Playing Church

In a sermon on James 4:1-10, R. Kent Hughes tells about a young father who one day heard a commotion going on in his backyard. He followed the noise outside and found his young daughter and several of her playmates involved in a heated argument. Taking it to be serious he immediately intervened, only to have his daughter tell him, "Daddy, we're just playing church!"

Just another one of those preacher stories? Sure it is. Far removed from the truth? Unfortunately, not at all. It is all too common to hear of churches struggling with serious internal problems. Sometimes it is all out war that is going on and the weapons are accusations, slander, innuendo, backbiting or lies. And, just like in any war, there are always casualties: reputations are hurt, hearts are embittered, weak believers are caught in the crossfire, and the Holy Spirit is grieved.

Who is right and who is wrong in such situations is not always easy to determine. In most cases, there is enough blame for both sides to share. The core issue is not who is right and who is wrong, but how can such situations be avoided in the first place? The answer is to surrender before the fight even starts.

In Philippians 2:3-4 Paul attempts to head off potential problems in the otherwise Philippian church by writing, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his owninterests, but also for the interests of others." In other words, surrender yourself. Seldom do church fights have anything to do with matters of faith. More often than not they have to do with conflicts in personality, direction, leadership and ministry styles. Instead of insisting on my way and crying about my needs, Scripture tells me to surrender in the greater interests of others. As Paul went on to say, possess the mind of Christ by taking on the heart of a servant. Surrender up front and few fights will follow.

Who knows—if we could get this principle of humble surrender right we might even hear a preacher story someday about a bunch of kids playing church by hugging each other and asking in concerned tones if there is anything the other needs. Oh well. It never hurts to dream.

Welcome a New Addition to our Staff

At this time we want to officially welcome Amy Love to the staff of *Carolina Christian* as the Design Editor. Amy is the daughter of the late Bill Love, a highly respected and deeply loved preacher in the Carolinas until his death in 1976. Amy is a dedicated Christian lady who worships with the Friendly Ave. church of Christ in Greensboro, NC. Her responsibilities include typesetting and layout design. We are happy to have Amy on our staff and are grateful that she is willing to use her artistic abilities to help make *Carolina Christian* the best magazine it can be.

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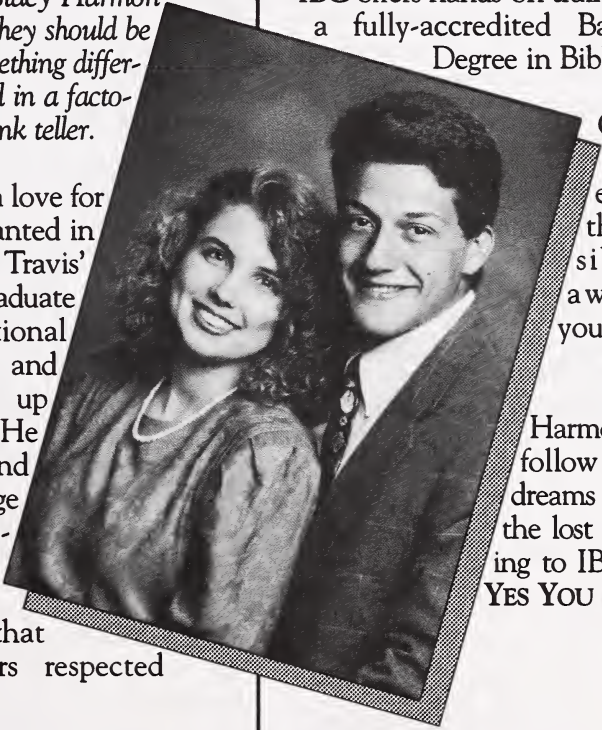

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Should the Preacher Be An Elder?

JIM MULLICAN

In the church in which I grew up the elders were always there, but preachers came and went. I remember that during the twelve years I was in public school we had six different preachers. It is not surprising, then, that during that time there was not a preacher who also served as an elder. In recent times, however, it has become more common for preachers also to serve as elders. One reason for that may be because preachers now tend to stay with churches longer. It is also more common to see preachers as elders in smaller congregations. Some question whether this is a good practice or not. What are the advantages and disadvantages of such a practice?

It might be best to begin by pointing out that it is clearly a scriptural arrangement. Paul wrote, "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching" (I Tim. 5:17, NIV). The word "honor" is used in the New Testament to mean respect (Mark 6:4, 12:39), but it can also refer to financial support (Mark 7:10-12; I Tim. 5:3ff). The expression "double honor" as used by Paul points not only to the respect an elder should receive, but also to the financial support deserved by one who preaches on a regular basis. For the purposes of this article, however, this passage acknowledges that there were those who served in both capacities.

This being the case, what are the advantages of having a preacher who meets the scriptural qualifications and has the confidence of the congregation to also serve as an elder? I can see at least five.

FIRST, it promotes stability and growth in the congregation by encouraging the preacher to remain in one location rather than moving after just a few years. Charles Hodge has said, "You can't build great churches on the back of a moving van." A preacher who moves every two of three years is never in one location long enough to do his most effective work in that community. Time is required to really know the people in the congregation. Time is needed to gain recognition and influence in the community as well. All the preachers I know who are elders have been in the same location for more than ten years and in one case more than forty. In each case the congregations in which they serve have grown faster than the average.

SECOND, serving as an elder enables the preacher to be more aware of the goals and plans of the eldership. One preacher friend who moved said that his primary reason for moving was that the elders did not communicate to him their plans and goals. Of course, better communication can be accomplished without the preacher being an elder, but it requires no effort if he is one. The preacher, elders, deacons and members are all part of the same team and communication needs to be free.

THIRD, in a small church it may be necessary for the preacher to serve as an elder in order to find enough qualified and willing men. I know of one congregation of seventy members with five elders, but that is quite unusual. Two or three elders per hundred members is more typical, and in some cases there is only one elder per hundred members. In a congregation of fifty or sixty members the preacher may be one of only two or three men who meet the scriptural standards for leadership.

FOURTH, the preacher may provide needed balance to an eldership. He may provide the impetus for works that might otherwise be neglected. He has often lived in more areas than others in the eldership and is thus more in tune with the church nationwide. Further, he is generally more knowledgeable about controversial issues that may confront the congregation and its elders.

FIFTH, the preacher usually does the work of an elder anyway. He is involved in visiting the sick, extending hospitality to strangers, feeding the flock, counseling the troubled, and providing spiritual leadership. If he meets the other scriptural requirements, then why should he not be recognized as an elder?

Are there negative aspects to this arrangement? I see only two.

First, if the preacher is a domineering person, problems may easily result, especially in a small church or in a situation where there are only two elders. If the other elder is willing to be dominated the net result is one-man leadership, as in the denominational pastor system. Fortunately, most preachers are not like this and the congregation should never appoint anyone to the eldership who sees it as a position of power. This applies to any potential elder, not just preachers. Those who must always have their own way have no place in the leadership of God's church.

Second, if the church is in the habit of "firing preachers," there is no need to ask him to become a shepherd and love the sheep. There must be a mutual love and respect among the members and the elders, or the church will not be able to work in peace and harmony. If the time comes when it is necessary to ask for his resignation as preacher, elder, or both, any man who is truly committed to the cause of Christ rather than his personal advancement will resign quietly. Those who will notshould be neither preachers or shepherds of the church. Discord and division are never God's will.

These negative possibilities aside, having a preacher who is also an elder can be a positive and healthy arrangement for a church. Should a preacher be an elder? Yes, if it is obvious that he has the trust and confidence of the congregation.

Jim Mullican is qualified to write on this subject by virtue of his own experience. In addition to serving the church in Clyde as its preacher, he also serves as an elder. You may write to him at Rt. 4 Box 30-A Clyde, NC 28721.

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Carolina Christian Classic Reprint:

The Work of Elders

Jim Gardner

We are told that the church lacks zeal, and true it is. But I, for one, have found no lack among us of fiery indignation at other men's sins, nor of a compelling eagerness to fill our pews with strangers, if that can be accomplished by any means that will not put us to the trouble of learning to love them. Not that we lack love in the abstract. On the contrary, we carry on a brisk trade in wholesale love of the lost. It is the retail redemption of unlovely individuals that proves too costly for our religion. Sinners have a nasty habit of needing forgiveness. They require of us a passionate compassion, far removed from the disinterested well-wishing that some actually dare to call love. Even after they become Christians, they continue to sin and require forgiveness, to suffer and require compassion. No wonder if we sometimes run from love to hide in duty, if we busy ourselves in programs so we will not have to become involved with people.

Consider the role that God has commanded elders to play in the church, and how often we have betrayed his plan and molded our finest men into emperors of trivia, but derelict shepherds.

Paul told the Ephesian elders to "shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Peter phrased it, "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you" (1 Pet. 5:2). Lest they doubt what being a shepherd means (and what it costs), Peter referred them to the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, the great pattern for all believers, and the exemplar for every elder. Jesus showed by His life that to lead meant to serve, to love, to give oneself to others and for others. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

Paul said that the Holy Spirit had made the Ephesian elders overseers of the flock. The word translated "overseer" does not mean primarily a boss at work, but rather a guardian, a helpful visitor in time of need. Paul told the Hebrews, "Obey your rulers and be subject to them, for they watch for your souls as those that shall give an account" (Heb... 13:17). The test of an eldership in judgment will not be its business and

Brotherhood News

Mike Mobley

Kannapolis, NC... Last April 28 the Kannapolis church hosted its 1996 Homecoming. Three of the congregations' former preachers were able to return and deliver three stirring messages. The congregation broke records four records with 137 for Bible study, 184 for the morning worship, the largest crowd ever for the dinner that followed, and 122 for the evening hour of worship. This was the first homecoming for the church, which is currently involved in an expansion program for the building.

Hamlet, NC... On June 28, 1995 a group of 24 people met together for the first time. Now, a little over a year later, the church has purchased a mobile home on five acres of land on Boyd Lake Rd. in Hamlet, a city of 6,800 souls. The average attendance for Sunday morning worship now is about 45 with 35 on Wednesday night. They have plans to construct a building with an 80 seat auditorium. The address for the church is the Boyd Lake Rd. church of organizational ability but its care of souls.

> "Nevertheless, the public duty of every Christian is private love."

I am afraid that we sometimes fall into the mistake of thinking the church primarily a business, of which the leaders are the board of directors. The church is not a business; it is a family. We do not belong to Christ, Inc., but to the family of God. Elders should love and guide their fellow Christians with the same deep commitment and tender love that a good man shows his family.

Consider finally the qualifications that God has set down for elders. God does not require of an elder business experience; he does require family experience. An elder need not be an expert at manipulating others; he is asked to have the infinitely more difficult and honorable ability to control himself. Gentleness, friendliness, and generosity adorn an elder and fit him for his tasks. Surely those tasks include something more than making out the budget.

I am not saying that elders do not have a proper role in the business affairs of the church. They have a role in every part of the church's life. I am saying that elders are intended to be our leaders, and that we most need leadership in the most important things. God has assigned them to guard souls and not to count money. Yet many an elder today knows to a penny the financial affairs of the church, but scarcely knows the names, and does not even guess at the sorrows, of the members of his congregation. The secret despair of breaking hearts longs for a friend to help. We answer by appointing an official.

It is easier to be an official than it is to be a friend, because it is easier to command that it is to serve. It is easier to preach at people than it is to reason with them, because it is easier to be loud than it is to be wise. Nevertheless, the public duty of every Christian is private love.

This article first appeared in the September, 1983 issue of ***Carolina Christian.*** *Jim Gardner currently resides in Richmond, VA.*

Brotherhood News

Christ, P.O. Box 1606, Hamlet, NC 28345. They desire the prayers of the brethren in the Carolinas.

YORK, SC... On June 2, 1996 the Gold Hill Rd. church of Christ met for the first time in York. The brethren are currently meeting in the Ramada Inn on Carowinds Rd. and hope to be in their new building by September. Jeff Trotter is their preacher. If you would like more information, you may contact the Charlotte Ave. church in Rock Hill, SC. The Gold Hill church is a planting by the Charlotte Ave. church.

MOCKSVILLE, NC ... The Carolina Bible Camp and Retreat Center, Inc., announces plans for its 40th Anniversary and Homecoming Celebration on September 14 to celebrate 40 years of Carolina Bible Camp. For more information call either Wilson Burton at (704) 782-0326, or Dennis Conner at (910) 374-3199. Also, CBC and Retreat Center announces that special CBC note cards are available for purchase. The cards feature four hand drawn sketches of camp scenes. Each pack contains 10 cards and envelopes for $5. If you would like to purchase some, call Wilson Burton.

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What Is It To Love?

KELLY MEREDITH

Every day we commonly hear the word "love." People use it in a wide variety of ways with an equally wide variety of meanings. For instance, I have said many times that I love something when what I really mean is that I liked the pleasure or feeling that something gave me. When I say "I love chocolate chip cookies," I mean that I really like the taste; however, I would not go out of my way to care for these cookies. In fact, the care of the cookies is the last thing I have in mind! Of course, "love" also has a much deeper meaning when used in another context, such as our love for a spouse, parent, child, sibling, or friend. And then there is our love for God.

It is this ability to love that helps to define who we are as human beings.

The problem, however, is that our love is imperfect. In I Corinthians 13:4-7 we have the well known list of the characteristics of love. The passage reads, "Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its

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own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." When we apply this ideal concept of love to our actual practice of love, it reveals our obvious shortcomings. Again, our love is imperfect.

> "It is this ability to love that helps to define who we are as human beings."

Is there really such a thing as perfect love? Yes. God, and only God, has loved us with a perfect love. Paul wrote to the Romans, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). We did nothing to merit it, but God loves us more than we can understand. The giving of Christ to die for us is the ultimate expression of that perfect love.

Because God does love us, He also demands that we love one another. First John 4:10-11 states, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." The word translated "ought" in this text has the meaning of moral obligation. It is a must! So we are obligated by the love of God shown to us to love one another in turn.

To what extent are we obligated to love? That question is answered in I John 3:16, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." It is probably true that you will never face the situation where you would have to die for our brethren, but you and I do have the opportunity to love them in so many other ways. If we are expected by God to love our brethren so much that we would die for them, is it asking too much to help them when much less is needed?

We are not expected to love perfectly, but we are expected to love in a way that is a true response to God's love for us. As a matter of fact, it is by that kind of love for one another that all men will know that we are truly Jesus' disciples (John 13:35).

Kelly Meredith preaches for the Albemarle church of Christ. He can be contacted at P.O. Box 245, Albemarle, NC 28002.

Some Things Are Easier Than Others

PHIL KINZER

A few years ago I joined a group of kids and a few adults in watching the demolition of the old house next door to the church building. I walked out to observe about thirty minutes after the bull dozer had started its work. In that thirty minutes I had missed a third of the tearing down! It only took an hour and a half for the whole process. That old house had stood there since 1921.

As I watched I thought about how much more time and painstaking care it took to build that it was taking to destroy. Choosing the lot. Surveying to get the house in just the right place. Digging the basement. Pouring the foundation. Framing it up. Putting in the plumbing and electrical wiring. Building the chimney one carefully placed brick at a time. All the minute finish work inside—paint, carpet, wallpaper. Decades of cleaning, repainting, repairing, maintaining. More than seventy years to bring the house to its present state, and an hour and a half to reduce it to a pile of rubble not even resembling a house.

It seemed to me at that moment that God was teaching me a parable as I stood there. A house is a whole lot like a life, and a whole lot like a family. It can take years of precious care to get one in the condition it needs to be in, and one can be destroyed quickly. With the wrong decisions at the wrong time, it can be done in an hour and a half ...or less.

> *"Your life is the most valuable thing you possess. Be careful what you do with it."*

Remember Len Bias? He was the University of Maryland basketball star who signed as the first round draft pick for the Boston Celtics several years ago. Years of hard work, sweat, and practice were about to pay their dividends. He was an instant millionaire. A few days after his signing, he chose to experiment with crack cocaine. In about an hour and a half he was dead. A lifetime of dreams and potential wasted.

God has given to you and me a precious gift. Your life is the most valuable thing you possess. Be careful what you do with it. It takes a lot longer to build one than to tear it down.

Phil Kinzer preaches for the Providence Rd. church of Christ in Charlotte, NC. You can contact him at 4900 Providence Rd., Charlotte, NC 28226.

Sunshine and Rain

PAUL JARRETT

One weekend recently I saw something at the mall which made me angry. I saw an older couple pushing the wheelchair of their adult son who had obviously been crippled from birth. I'm not exactly sure why seeing them upset me. I had seen similar sights before without feeling such emotion. Perhaps it was the contrast of seeing this one family in the midst of so many other obviously healthy, prosperous families.

Let me try to explain my anger. My first thought was one of understanding. I knew for that moment why some people become angry with God for allowing such tragedies as birth defects to strike some families so indiscriminately. It is easy to refute the "problem of evil" when engaged in a neat theological discussion. However, it is far more difficult when youexperience the emotions that you feel when you see a real life, human illustration of this problem.

However, as I thought about what I was feeling my anger moved away from God (who really is not the cause of such evil) to what I believe should be the true focus of our righteous indignation.

First, I was angry at sin and the havoc it has wrought on mankind. I know that God does not hold anyone personally accountable for another's sins. However, what I saw in the mall made me painfully aware of the consequences that come as a result of our living in a sin-scarred world. It made me long for the day when we can live in a better world where sin and its fruit (fruit which befalls all mankind) will be no more.

Second, my anger ultimately came to rest on myself for my ingratitude and the complaints I am far too inclined to make when faced with minor discomforts. I have been spared so much of the "rain" that falls indiscriminately on others who are no worse sinners than me. I have been the recipient of so much of the "sunshine" that falls on others who are far more righteous than me. With that thought in mind I could no longer feel anger, but only gratitude towards the merciful Father who is in heaven, "For He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt. 5:45).

Paul Jarret may be contacted at 1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210.

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Where is Your Confidence?

Peter Rode

On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus spent the last evening with His apostles. During their last meal together He teaches them, among other things, that they are not to panic and give up hope. To be sure, things were going to be different once He left, but He was not going to leave them alone. The Holy Spirit was coming in His place and God would never forsake them. "Do not let your hearts be troubled..." He urges them. In essence He was saying to them, "I have made certain promises to you, and I *will* fulfill them. Just have confidence in me."

"...GOD IS GOD AND HE IS IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION."

The words remind me of an incident in Mark 5:35-41 when He had to teach them the same lesson. During a storm the disciples panicked and Jesus was called upon to still the storm. Afterwards He asked them, "Why were you so fearful? Don't you even yet have confidence in me?"

Many years before, David had written a psalm with the same theme. Psalm 46 is divided into three sections, and in each section various situations are described together with David's response to each. In the first section, made up of verses 2–3, nature in upheaval and David's corresponding response is that he will not fear. In the second section, verses 4–7, Jerusalem is under attack but David is confident the Lord will come to his assistance. Finally, verses 8–11 show the battlefield after war and David's reaction is to rest in the fact that God is God and He is in control of the situation. The overarching theme of that psalm is found in verse 1 when he says, "God is our refuge and strength..."

Today we still have turmoil all around us. We live in an ever changing world with people becoming more and more hostile towards God and His followers. Life is becoming increasingly more difficult to manage. Uncertainties and insecurities abound. However, the believer's response must not be one of panic and despondency, but rather that of resting in God and putting our confidence in Him who can handle all our problems.

So, where is your confidence? My prayer is that it will be placed squarely in God. It if isn't, my further prayer is that you will see the necessity of turning to Him so that you may cease your nervous striving and know that He is God.

Peter Rode ministers to the saints at the Friendly Ave. church in Greensboro, NC. He may be contacted at 5101 W. Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410.

Daddy Was Right

RITA WATSON

My father is a good and honest man, a man who happened to be born and raised in a simpler time and place. To Daddy, sex education was short and to the point. "Just don't kiss them; that's what starts the whole thing." That's what he told all five of his kids.

It was a simple matter to him. In Daddy's world, people did not engage in sex outside of marriage and if they dared, they certainly didn't talk about it. You might know someone who "had to get married," but they didn't brag about it and you certainly didn't discuss it with them. Most adhered to Paul's admonition that "it is shameful to even mention the things that the disobedient do in secret" (Eph. 5:13, NIV). There was shame attached to sin and there were consequences for those who engaged in sex outside the marriage bond.

Then my generation came along and somehow we became convinced that things should be different. Maybe, because the rest of our lives were becoming more complicated and the place we lived was no longer a simple rural area, we thought new times meant new rules. After all, this wasn't the 1950's. This was the age of information and communication. We needed to be more sophisticated. We needed to be free. All of life had to be explained in detail.

So, we developed sex education classes. We talked freely with our children. After all, they certainly saw plenty of it on TV and at the movies. It was a topic in virtually every magazine and newspaper they saw. Everyone, from their teachers to their peers talked and even laughed about sex. Sex became common place and lost its sense of mystery.

Further, we loaded our children down with the facts of life. They watched videos and were given books. We enlightened parents told them about "safe sex" and how to decide when it was the right time for them. All the possible options were explained (except for the option of abstinence). And the shame was diminished.

> "We bombarded our children with knowledge, but we did not give them wisdom."

But the consequences were not. The rate of sexually active children rose dramatically. Children were raising children. AIDS and STDs reached epidemic proportions. Single parenthood becamea way of life. Abortions skyrocketed. And then we wondered...what went wrong?

We bombarded our children with knowledge, but we did not give them wisdom. We forgot about the Creator of sex. We forgot that in His sex manual there is only one option. There is only one time when it is "right for you." There is only one way to have safe sex. Sex is for marriage, period.

Daddy was right. It really is so very simple.

Rita Watson can be contacted at 903 Oak St., Marion, NC 287252.

North Raleigh Church of Christ...

DON UTLEY

After years of prayer and planning, the North Raleigh church of Christ in Raleigh, North Carolina, opened the doors to its new church building on July 7, 1996. A special dedication service will be held on Sunday, August 25, at 3:00 p.m. at the new facility, which is located at 8701 Falls of Neuse Rd. Christians from all around the state are encouraged to come and helpcelebrate God's goodness.

The North Raleigh congregation began meeting six years ago as a church planting by the Brooks Ave. church of Christ in Raleigh. The church began meeting in a motel and moved five years ago to a store front in a local shopping center. Nonetheless, the congregation experienced significant growth and is now not only self-supporting, but has been able to build a wonderful facility with auditorium seating for 400, downstairs classrooms, an office suite, and upstairs classrooms which will be competed at a later date.

The expense of the building was moderated significantly by church members who were willing to provide "sweat equity"—painting, landscaping, cleaning, and decorating—in order to cut move-in costs. The Lord has blessed the North Raleigh church beyond every expectation, and we praise God for His goodness. Don Utley is the preacher and may be reached at the church office at (919) 845-0011.

Editor's Note: Please note the address change for the North Raleigh church of Christ in your ***Carolina Christian*** *church directory. The new address is North Raleigh church of Christ, 8701 Falls of Neuse Rd., Raleigh, NC 272615. You may reach the church by E-mail at nrcoc@earthlink.com. The church began six years ago with a worship attendance of approximately 75 and now has twice that many in attendance. We rejoice with our brothers and sisters and thank God for the way He has blessed them.*

Ministry Focuses on Training New Elders

JOHN JOHNSTON

What does it take to be a visionary shepherd in the coming century? "It seems I'm hearing questions similar to this more and more these days,"says John Johnston, retired businessman and member of the board of World Christian Broadcasting Corporation. "There seem to be few outlets where elders can develop the skills in visionary planning, strategic direction and congregational shepherding that these times are needing and that members are demanding."

In response to this need, Johnston, in cooperation with the World Christian Broadcasting Corporation, developed two workshops designed to train elders in such skills as planning, visionary leadership, congregational involvement, equipping and ministry focus. One workshop is entitled the "Shepherd Leader in the Twenty-First Century" and the second is entitled "Planning and Involvement Workshop." Both are eight hour workshops (one evening and one morning) and both are offered free to churches. "We want every congregation to be able to take advantage of these workshops, because we know they are effective. In those that we've already conducted, we've seen greater cooperation, greater involvement and growth at that congregation," said Johnston. "This is a ministry and we want as many as can to benefit from it. That's why the workshops are free. All congregations need to do is schedule us and pay the expenses."

Johnston, as well as C.L. Cox of Searcy, Arkansas and Orville Lee from Leoma, Tennessee have enjoyed successful business careers. These men have combined their ministries and are using their planning and management skills to help churches focus on goal setting, planning, leadership and shepherding needs for their futures. Each of these men have devoted much of their time as elders in the Lord's church and additionally serve on the boards of various Christian efforts.

The task of elders truly seems more difficult each year. The future is less certain and the demands are greater—in fact, it seems that elders today are expected to do a job that is far different from the one many agreed to when they accepted the noble task. "I'm finding that congregations are demanding more and with words that are hard to understand by some of our elderships, words like real leadership, accountability, vision, focus and goals," said Johnston.

For these reasons, "The Shepherd Leader in the Twenty-First Century" deals with such topics as *What is Important in the Life of Your Church, What Does it Really Mean to be a Leader, Vision and Focus for the Next Century, Planning and Involvement for the Most Effectiveness, Delegation and Communication, Leadership Development, Elders' and Ministers' Relationship,* and *Renewing the Shepherd's Mind.*

In the "Planning and Involvement Workshop," topics such as *How to Enhance a Ministry System for Greater Effectiveness, Establish Specific Goals for Each Ministry, How to Effectively Plan, Proven Management and Church Growth Tools,* and *How to Help Christians Use Their Talents to the Fullest* are covered.

Johnston stresses that these are hands-on training workshops with detailed planning sheets, brainstorming and word sessions being involved. He encourages congregations to plan these workshops as soon as possible because of the limited number scheduled throughout the year.

For more information about these free workshops contact John H. Johnston at the MacGregor church of Christ, 3815 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers, FL 33901. You can also call (941) 482-3861, (941) 936-4554, or World Christian Broadcasting at (615) 371-8707. A free brochure is available.

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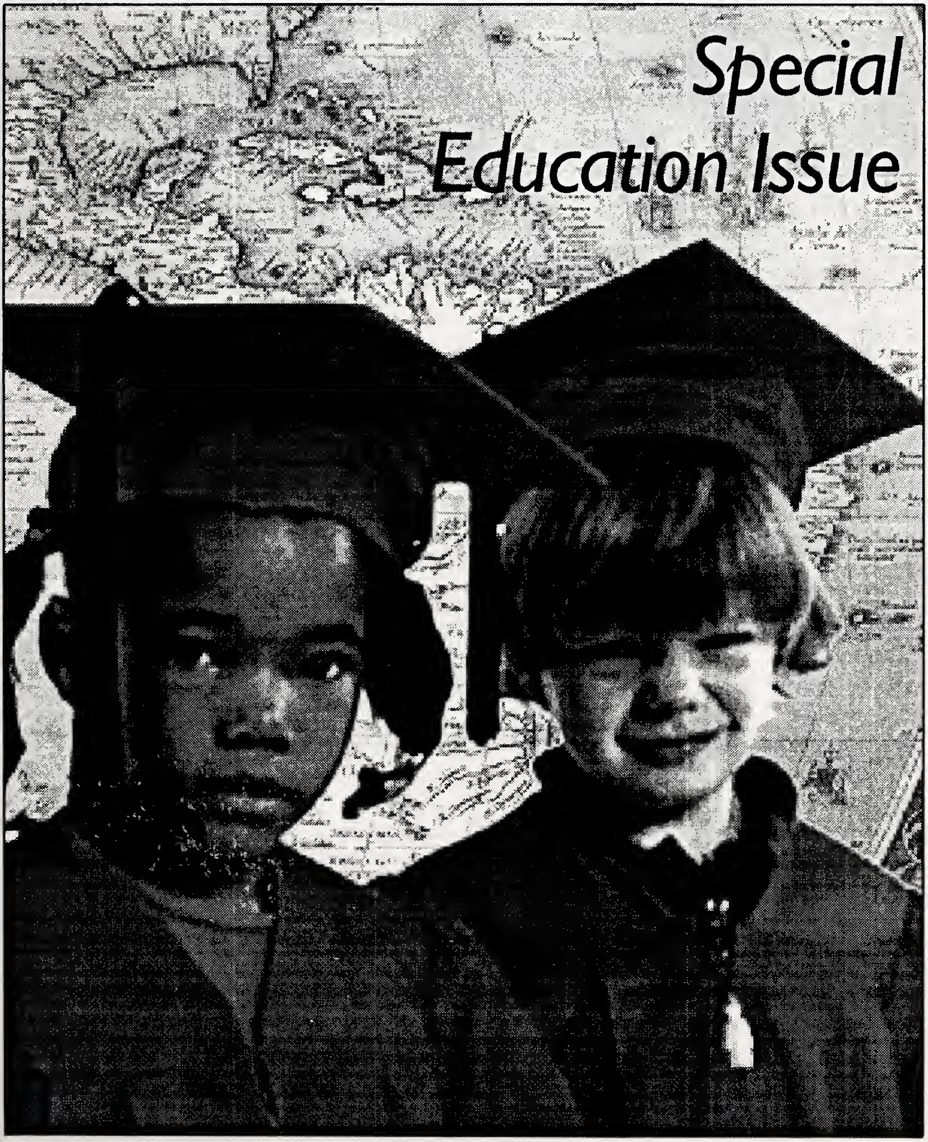

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(ISSN 0008-672X)
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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Rd., Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: Individual–$10/year ($18/2 years and $26/3 years); club of five or more–$9 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles–60¢/copy/month; church mailing list (minimum 15) 75¢/copy/month. Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

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The Nature of Christian Joy

Dennis Conner

The story is told of the preacher who met Groucho Marx and paid homage to the great comedian by saying, "Mr. Marx, I want to thank you for all the enjoyment you've given to the world." Never one to hesitate when a door was left standing wide open, Groucho replied, "And I want to thank you for all the enjoyment you've taken out of it!" Groucho's biting sarcasm betrays a perception of preachers, and many Christians, that still persists today. It is the perception that Christians are a dour and sour lot who typically demonstrate a lack of joy as they stand opposed to just about anything and everything that is pleasurable.

While it is certain that the world (including Groucho Marx) has little or no conception of the nature of biblical joy, it is disconcerting all the same that the perception even exists. It is more than just a little ironic that the one people who should be the model of joy are often perceived as those who possess it the least. And to be honest, the perception is not altogether wrong. In fact, I sometimes wonder if we Christians even understand, must less experience, true joy. Paul wrote in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say rejoice!" In this brief text we find the key to real joy.

First of all, Christian joy is a matter of the will. It is something to be done. Victor Frankl, the famous psychologist and concentration camp survivor from World War II, said, "The last great freedom is the ability to choose one's attitude in any given circumstance." It was the exercise of that freedom, he writes, that enabled him to survive. He chose to be joyful and optimistic rather than give in to despair. That is the nature of Christian joy. It is an attitude, and no one else is responsible for my attitudes but me.

Paul further teaches in this text that genuine joy is the result of a relationship, and therein lies the key. For many people joy is something they actively seek; it is an objective to be pursued. We hear our friends in the world say, "All I'm looking for is a little happiness." And for them, happiness is experienced only when the circumstances are favorable. They are happy, even joyful, when things are going well and all the pieces fit nicely together. But that kind of happiness is a fragile and fleeting thing. It is controlled by circumstance, not the will. When circumstances get out of order, joy gives way to frustration and even despair. For such people (including many Christians), joy is the product of circumstance.

Biblical joy, however, is not the result of favorable circumstances, nor is it something to be pursued as such. Rather, it is the result of a relationship with Jesus Christ. Listen again to Paul, "Rejoice *in the Lord...*" Authentic joy is a by–product of knowing Christ; it is experienced in the context of a relationship with Him. Further, biblical joy exists in spite of circumstances, not because of them. As Paul put it, "Rejoice in the Lord *always*." Joy can be experienced anytime and all the time. Witness Paul as he wrote these very words from the confines of a Roman prison! Christian joy is not a fragile and fleeting thing. Instead, it is the peacefulness of soul that derives from a deep settled conviction that whatever the circumstances may be, everything will be fine. Our joy and peace is Christ.

Why is the manifestation of authentic joy so important to the believer? Two reasons. First, for the sake of one's own well-being. Many Christians allow themselves to fall prey to the same frustrations, pressures, stresses and attitudes that plague the life of the non-Christian, essentially living the same life as the person in the world. We are called to something else, however. We are called to be joyful, and it is time we were obedient to that calling. Second, the manifestation of authentic joy is important for the sake of our witness to the world. If our non-Christian friends and acquaintances around us see that our experience is really not much different than theirs—if they see that our faith hasn't really made much difference and we too are controlled by circumstances just as they are—then why should they want to become Christians? On the other hand, when they see that regardless of the storms and circumstances of life we are always hopeful, always peaceful, always confident (always joyful!), our joy becomes a powerful witness for Christ. There is nothing more discouraging and counter-productive than a joyless Christian, and there is nothing more convicting and impressive than a joyful one.

It may not be that you've taken the enjoyment out of the world, but maybe you have allowed the world to take the joy out of your life. If so, repent. Start rejoicing, and do it in the Lord!

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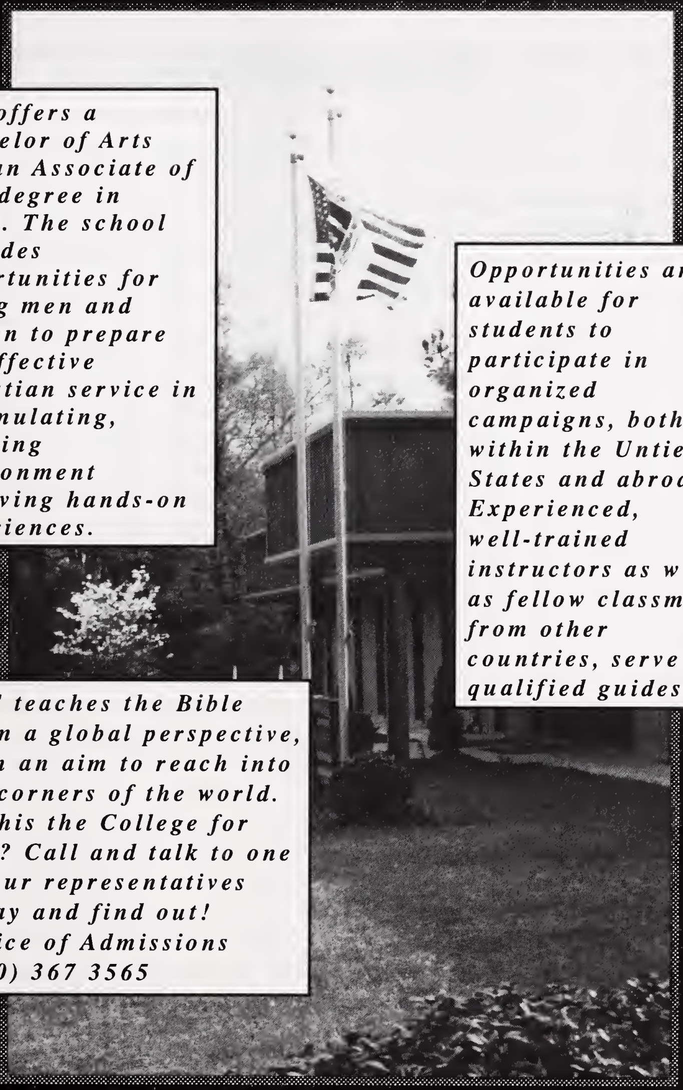

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Associate Editorial:

The Bible Still Supported by the Evidence

JIM MULLICAN

Biblical archaeology is a field of tremendous importance. It does not "prove the Bible is true" and thus eliminate the need for faith, but it does frequently verify events and even minor details mentioned in the Bible. If the remains of Noah's ark should be found tomorrow on Mt. Ararat, it would not prove the biblical flood account, although it would perhaps leave many critics at a loss for words. All it would "prove" is that a rather large vessel somehow came to be on Mt. Ararat. Was it built there in an early attempt to prop up the flood story? Did the flood account originate to explain the existence of such a vessel? These are the kinds of questions those lacking in faith would ask.

With all that said, I would like to share with you three articles that recently came to my attention.

First, the July 18, 1996 *Asheville Citizen-Times* told of an interesting development regarding ancient Jericho. Liberals have dated the conquest of Jericho by Joshua around 1200 B.C., if they accept it at all. Conservatives have usually dated it around 1400–1440 B.C. Now, for some time geologists have suggested that several aspects of the plagues on Egypt could have resulted from the eruption of Mt. Thera on the island of Santorini, which occurred in 1628 B.C. Recent carbon dating of seeds found in the ruins of Jericho indicate that the city was destroyed about forty-five years later than the eruption, allowing just enough intervening time for the wilderness sojourn. Such tantalizing tidbits of information will no doubt cause much study and debate in the coming years.

Second, the July/August 1996 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* also contained an account which was interesting. It pointed out that recent boreholes made at various points in the Middle East show that the area has not always been as dry as it is today. In relatively recent times the rainfall has been heavier, Israel was heavily forested, and the Sinai Desert and Saudi Arabian deserts were covered with grass. That casts the exodus from Egypt in a whole new light, explaining how Israel was able to live in what is today a barren desert. The same article also shows a satellite photograph of a now-dry riverbed extending from southwest to northeast across central Saudi Arabia. This river may have still been flowing in the days of Abraham. The significance of all this is that in earlier times, Canaan was truly a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Bible says. The river's discoverer also speculates that it may be the Pishon mentioned in Genesis 2:11, since it would have entered the Persian Gulf about where the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers do. Could the garden of Eden be in Iraq or Kuwait?

The third interesting development is a new book called *Eyewitness to Jesus,* by Carsten Peter Thiede and Matthew D'ancona. It focuses on three tiny fragments of a papyrus manuscript ofMatthew's gospel, containing only a few words from Matthew 26:7-8, 10, 14-15. The photograph and ad I saw displayed only one side of the pieces, but the importance of these little fragments is that they have been dated to A.D. 40–70, making them the oldest known New Testament fragments and actually going back to Matthew's own time. This could be his own handwriting!

These are indeed interesting and exciting times!

Education

Ron Newberry

Education, the systematic instruction and training calculated to impart knowledge and develop skills, has been the foundation of growth and development of every civilized society. Cultures that ignore or misdirect educational pursuits may survive, but they cannot thrive over the long term.

For those in the world, education is basically a means to the end of achievement, success, or even exploitation. For Christians education is also a means to an end. However, the end in view is loftier and more noble. Every activity for the Christian is dedicated toward glorifying God by developing the innate abilities and gifts God has given to them. That means that we have to be conscientious about how we educate our children and to what we allow them to be exposed.

To say the current state of education in our country is in a state of flux is an understatement. There has been near panic in the educational community about sagging SAT and ACT scores in recent years. We hear about outcome based education, sex education, the rewriting of history and the theory of evolution. The debate over school prayer rages on. Violence in our public schools has escalated. What are we to do? What are Christian parents to do? What's going on in the educational world? Does the secular educational system have anything to offer? Is home schooling the answer for everyone? What are the advantages of a Christian college? What does a campus ministry have to offer? How can we use unconventional methods to teach the gospel in places where missionaries might not be allowed to travel? These are some of the relevant questions I asked as I thought about this issue, and these are the questions I have asked the writers to respond to.

In this issue of *Carolina Christian* we have a variety of articles that address many of the issues involving education as it relates to a Christian perspective. The articles are written by professional educators as well as non-professionals. They cover a variety of concerns from elementary school to college to an unconventional approach combining university education and missions. Each author brings a perspective that is unique to their experiences and involvement in our educational process. However, the most important perspective they bring to the discussion of education is the Christian point of view. This issue of *Carolina Christian* attempts to bring these various perspectives together in order to broaden the reader's understanding of the variety of educational opportunities available to our children from elementary school through the university experience.

Worried parents have looked for alternatives in private schools and home schools. Like other parents, Christian parents are concerned with the secular education their children receive. However, they want to insure that their children receive an education that doesn't point toward secular fulfillment only. They want an education that doesn't undermine Christian values and Christian ethics. That experience is available and each parent has to determine what works best for them in their situation. These articles are an attempt to present some of the opportunities available in the broad spectrum of our educational world.

Ron Newberry preaches for the Friendly Ave. Church of Christ in Greensboro, NC. You may contact him at 5101 W. Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 272410.

Why I Chose to Home School

JANICE CHADWELL

People who know me well may be surprised to learn that home schooling was not a path that I chose willingly—at least not at first. Although I have a degree in primary education and taught in the public schools for nine years, I must admit that the idea at first sounded strange—almost ridiculous. Parents teach their own kids at home! How could anyone consider such an idea? Why would they even want to?

My thoughts began to change when my daughter Liz entered middle school. Liz was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) at the end of the third grade. By this time school had become a daily struggle and heartbreak for her. Although she did have some good teachers who helped her succeed in elementary school, things fell apart when she got to middle school. Her reading and math skills were too good to entitle her to special help, but she had much difficulty dealing with the classroom setting—both behaviorally and academically. By the end of the seventh grade my husband and I decided that she could not succeed in the public school setting. Since we could not afford private school, home schooling seemed to be our only alternative. Thanks to friends in the church and other home schoolers, I set out on this scary endeavor.

> "The more I learned the more I began to see home schooling as a positive alternative to traditional education and a road to academic excellence, not just as a means of rescue for a child with learning difficulties."

As I became acquainted with other home schoolers through the local support group, I was impressed by both the level of commitment made by the families and the accomplishments of their children. Many home schooling families had a closeness and training of their children regarding God that I desired for my own family. When I met other teenagers who had been home schooled for many years, I found them to be respectful, God-fearing, and noticeably less involved with such teenage problems as sex, drugs, alcohol and alienation from parents. I found teens who chose to spend their summers on mission trips or helping in family businesses. I saw a difference in these families that I found worth pursuing for my own.

I began to read and study everything I could about home schooling. I attended conferences and classes whenever they were available. The more I learned the more I began to see home schooling as a positive alternative to traditional education and a road to academic excellence, not just as a means of rescue for a child with learning difficulties. Although my son, James, did not have any learning difficulties, we decided to involve him with home schooling as well.

Through contact with other home schoolers, I observed that it didn't take a certified teacher to successfully work with a child that you love. One parent with a few children can give more attention to each child than even the best, most dedicated teacher can give to a classroom of 20-30 students. Also, a parent as tutor is able to adjust the learning process to the child, whereas the school setting expects the child to adjust to the learning process. It is often possible to be more flexible in the home school setting than in the public school setting. A parent can be sure that a child has mastered the needed subject or skill before moving on, while in the public school classroom there is a greater need to maintain a schedule.

Home schooling has not always been easy. There have been times when I wasn't sure I could continue, but there were also times of difficulty and frustration when my child attended public school. No chosen path is without its obstacles. I am pleased with the path that we chose and believe that our family is much stronger because of the time and focus that we have put into the education of our children. The flexibility we have is wonderful. Instead of trying to jam some Bible into a hectic day of school, homework, clubs, sports, etc., I am blessed by starting our school day with Bible study. I am confident that my son has Bible knowledge that few eight year olds can match, and this knowledge is the only thing that will matter a thousand years from now! Also, as a Christian parent I am able to monitor the content of the subject matter my child studies.

I am able to select science resources that teach from a biblical perspective, rather than have my child be taught as fact the unsupported theory of evolution. And history is another subject for which I am able to find a wealth of materials that still include references to God's role in our world.

We completed our fifth year of home schooling in June by celebrating Liz's graduation. Combined with other home school graduates we had a beautiful, very meaningful celebration where parents presented diplomas to their own children (in North Carolina home schools are classified as private schools and therefore are entitled to issue diplomas). Most who attended the graduation were moved and impressed by these young people. It was truly a wonderful experience for our whole family.

Liz has been taking classes at the local community college this past year and her plans are to take their two year transfer program and then enroll at UNC-G for a degree in design.

Yes, I am now a true advocate of home education. I am pleased with the results for our family and am blessed with a husband who enables me to remain at home with my children. Wherever we go my kids are asked, "Where do you to school?" I get lots of positive feedback from strangers when they find out school is at home! But my daughter is the first to groan and roll her eyes when they then start to ask me questions. "Oh no! Once you get her started talking about home schooling we'll be here all day!"

Janice Chadwell and her family worship with the Friendly Ave. church in Greensboro, NC. You can contact her care of the church at 5101 W. Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410.

Why I Remain in the Public Schools

MICHAEL SEAMON

Public schools, private schools, and now home schools offer parents a choice as to how their children are educated. The purpose of this article is not to debate which type of schooling is better or which one should be the choice for Christians—I believe there is a place for a variety of schools in our educational system in order to adequately address the needs of children and families today. However, when I began my career 24 years ago I had to make a decision between public and private school teaching positions. I chose to remain in the public schools. Some people ask why I have remained in public school education, while others have even asked why I have remained in education at all! Allow me to share my reasons with you.

> "My view is that I can make a difference one person at a time."

To be honest, there are some days when I ask the same questions. We all know that education in general and public schools in particular have received much negative press in recent years. I would be the first to say that all is not well in our schools, but as you listen to the media you also see that all is not well in our homes and communities either. I believe that our schools mirror what is happening in our families and communities. You may ask, "Why would I want my children to attend public schools if they are a mirror of the troubles in our society?"

For me, I have chosen to remain an educator because I love teaching, and there are others like me. You should want your child to continue to attend public school because educators still have an influence in the lives of young people. Teaching math and science to middle school students for thirteen years was very rewarding. I am currently an elementary school principal working with 585 students and 75 staff members. My school is one of 94 schools in a newly merged system of over 57,000 students. One might wonder what difference a person can make in a system this large. My view is that I can make a difference one person at a time. This is perhaps the primary reason I have remained in public education through the years and why I believe it is important for Christians to continue to have a part in public education.

I believe Christian parents should be involved with schools whether they have children enrolled in them or not. As schools have engaged in various restructuring programs, many have created advisory teams made up of parents and community people. Parents are also included in school leadership and management teams along with a variety of committees. These are opportunities that were not available in public schools twenty years ago. All of these provide Christian parents an avenue for input and influence in the public school educational process.

Public schools must enroll all students who apply, whereas private schools may set criteria and restrict enrollment as they wish. Because of this I believe it is important that we continue to have a cross section of our communities enrolled in our

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The Christian College

Carolyn Amoretty

Reaching agreement with your kids on which college they should attend is a challenging and important task. When selecting a particular college, families traditionally weigh a variety of factors, such as financial requirements, quality of education, proximity to home, sports programs, major programs, etc. Although these are legitimate reasons for selecting a particular college, there remains one essential factor that is often not considered, and that is the spiritual dimension. As an alumnus of a Christian university, I would like to share some of the advantages of attending a college where Christian principles are an integral part of daily life.

Although highly competitive, the college years are among the most exciting times in a person's life. Christian campuses provide a safer environment in which this enjoyment can be fully realized. Avoidance of illicit behavior is promoted through the enforcement of rules prohibiting the use of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs. Neither are there the temptations of co-ed dormitories. The availability of activities such as devotionals and Bible lectures combined with the presence of other Christian students serves to provide an atmosphere of spiritual nurturing.

The faculty and staff at Christian colleges and universities understand that young adults with newly found freedom often struggle with their faith. Christian teachers and instructors realize that providing academic support is not their

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public schools. I am not suggesting that all children must attend public schools, but I am suggesting that our educational system will only get better when we Christians are involved in the process. I not only want the best education possible for my child, but for yours as well.

My philosophy of education is based on my strong belief in the Bible and the value of human life. In addition I draw strategies from well-known, qualified educators and school reformers. I believe that all children can learn and that as an educator it is up to me to find strategies that will address a student's learning style.

Rachel Carson says in *The Sense of Wonder*, "I sincerely believe that for the child, and for the parent seeking to guide him, it is not half so important to *know* as to *feel.* If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow...It is more important to pave the way for the child to want to know than to put him on a diet of facts he is not ready to assimilate...If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder...he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in." I hope and pray that through my career in the public schools I have helped children to keep their sense of wonder and to appreciate the excitement of the world God has given us. I hope that the students I work with will become life-long learners, seeking ways to serve their fellow man.

Michael Seamon is an elementary school principal. He and his wife, Karen, have two daughters and are foster parents with AGAPE of North Carolina. Michael may be contacted at 3903 Burguss Ct., High Point, NC 27265.

Ministry and the College Campus

Bailey Forrest

Campus ministry is "the best kept secret" of the Restoration Movement says Douglas Dickey in the introduction to his book *Campus Ministry: Restoring the Church on the University Campus.* Though this claim might be somewhat exaggerated, it still describes the frequent lack of understanding of and appreciation for campus ministry and its tremendous accomplishments in the 100 years of its history in our movement.

The general lack of knowledge may be due to a couple of influences. First, our strong focus on encouraging our young men and women to attain a Christian college education has detracted attention from the advantages of attending a public school and joining the church's ministry to it. Getting a college education at a Christian school can certainly be a tremendous spiritual experience in the life of a student. The Christian resources and teachers provide a great environment for growth. However, attaining an education at a secular school can also be a great time of spiritual maturation, especially in locations where there is an active ministry of the church to the campus. Alexander Campbell himself began his separation from sectarian creeds while a student at Glasgow University in a volunteer "training school for lay preachers," according to Dickey. The ministry of this training school through discussion groups and a caring community was very similar to

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only mission. They are also truly committed to the students' need for spiritual guidance. This display of concern is frequently demonstrated by the unselfish giving of their personal time. It is no wonder that many of these faculty members become role models in the eyes of their students.

High scholastic standards are of extreme importance in Christian universities. However, Christian university graduates will be prepared for the professional work force in ways that exceed pure academics. Christian ethics and doctrine play a significant role in the general curriculum of most Christian schools. A major priority is the instilling of a strong sense of integrity and moral responsibility. Furthermore, the typically smaller class sizes allow for greater involvement of the student in the educational process. Teamwork and group involvement in and out of the classroom allow students to acquire leadership skills which are so vital in today's competitive work place.

At a Christian university you will find that a great deal of attention is paid to every facet of development in the student's college experience. The social well-being of each student is a matter of concern for faculty and administration alike. Social and academic clubs offer numerous opportunities for the development of lasting relationships. The importance of commitment within marriages and Christian family values are standard themes in the teaching program.

The mission statement of Harding University summarizes in one phrase the spirit and nature of what Christian education is all about: "Educating for eternity."

Carolyn Amoretty is a 1996 graduate of Harding University in Searcy, AR. She can be contacted at 1521 Bridford Parkway, Apt. 6-G, Greensboro, NC 27407.

campus ministry today. The mission orientation of campus ministry, along with its caring community, provides the opportunity to strengthen faith as the Christian student interacts with the world.

Second, a lack of understanding of campus ministry may be due to the negative results of the "discipling movement" (the Boston Movement, or the International Churches of Christ as they now call themselves). For many years we saw students become socially pressured in these particular campus ministries to act in ways harmful to themselves, their families and our congregations. For over a decade now, the authoritarian leadership of such ministries has been identified. However, many campus ministries exist, and have existed, that do not practice such authoritarian control. Unfortunately, some Christians are still hesitant to fully support healthy and vibrant campus ministries because of the fear of being a part of something harmful.

> "The reality is that students can attend a public school and not only *not* lose their faith, but strengthen it."

The reality is that students can attend a public school and not only not lose their faith, but strengthen it. Certainly, many students do not retain activity in the church after beginning college. As pointed out by Paul Cates in the January, 1995 issue of *Christian Chronicle*, nearly half of all Christian students who come to a public school do not even have enough motivation to attend one worship service of the local church. Did the college experience destroy the faith of these students? How could that be if they did not even have enough motivation to attend a church assembly? In contrast, the students who do participate in a campus ministry from the beginning of their first year often graduate with a strong faithfulness to the Lord built through the fire of the campus experience (I Peter 1:7) and the love of the church (Eph. 4:14-16).

Campus ministry has tremendous opportunities to work for the Lord's kingdom that are hard to match in other situations. After understanding these opportunities I am confident Christians will respond with enthusiasm for its work.

First, there are many and various types of people in the concentrated area of our public colleges and universities. These millions of students come from far and wide to receive an education to prepare them to be the leaders of the future. In Raleigh alone, over 30,000 students come from every county in our state, from every state in our nation, and from many others nations around the world (including ones difficult to enter for mission work). The direction of the nations begins in the decisions and discoveries of students in our schools. The potential affect on the world of tomorrow is awe inspiring. Charles Malik, former president of the General Assembly of the United Nations, writes in his book *A Christian Critique of the University*, "The university is a clear-cut fulcrum with which to move the world." College influence touches nearly every segment of our modern society, no matter what field one might observe or what nation one wants to touch. Campus ministry has the opportunity to reach these individuals for Christ, and does.

In fact, the college years are a most opportune time to influence any person to give their life to Jesus. In *Signs of the Times* Paul Tan stated that 95% of all American Christians made their commitment to the Lord before the age of twenty-five. I believe that if we tested this statistic in our own congregations by a show of hands the result would be validating. In a survey conducted by the Gallup Organization, Inc. that was published in 1985 (and cited in *Ministering on the College Campus,* Nashville, TN: 20th Century Christian Foundation, 1991, p. 7), it was found that the age range of 18–24 years was more than double the percentage of the next highest range (25–29) and at least triple the percentage of all other age ranges. This survey showed that the college years were significant in most peoples' lives when it came to making their commitment of faith. These statistics support what we already know. College students are open to learning and change. The church must enter their environment so that God can use us to turn them to Him. Campus ministries reach out in this environment every day and find that people are open to the good news about Jesus.

Besides reaching those students who are not Christians, campus ministry offers another opportunity: it can support and mature the Christians that do come to non-Christian schools.

For each student that goes to a Christian college there are more that go to a secular school. Without attention to campus ministry, the church may fail to provide for the special needs of its own members who are trying to follow Jesus on the secular campuses. Secular schools will challenge Christian views. With the support of the church these challenges can produce growth. Without it, Christians may turn away, at least temporarily, during this vulnerable time.

In addition to these opportunities, campus ministry offers a unique possibility for Christian education in secular schools. Bible classes and Christian lifestyle classes are regularly offered by campus ministries. Though the classes are not applicable for college credit, the college environment stimulates the class to function at a college level of preparation and expectation. The teaching occurs while the student faces questions raised in his or her secular environment. The contrast sharpens the discussions. When these are coupled with individual attention to maturing the student to be like Jesus, a graduate can leave prepared to be a servant in the church wherever he or she may go.

A final opportunity is that campus ministries help to meet the need for universities to find a moral bearing. In the "multi-cultural correctness" of the university atmosphere, absolute principles of morality are hard to find. In the confusion, the church has the opportunity to voice the goodness of God's principles for life. They are the best and truest ways to follow. Christians must enter the discussions of morality and values with love, wisdom and confidence. For the sake of the campus ministry and for the Lord, we must not shrink away to protective environments that do not interact in the trenches of proposals and critiques. We know the God of the universe and we must boldly persuade people that His loving guidance is best. The church, through campus ministry, has the opportunity to do that.

In realizing the powerful opportunities in campus ministry to serve the Lord, it is my prayer that the church will support campus ministry whenever and wherever possible. If a student in your congregation is attending a public school, then guide him or her to connect with the church in the area. Investigate to see if a campus ministry is active there and personally arrange for the student to meet the church. North Carolina presently has four campus ministries at major universities. If someone you know is considering ministry or mission work, suggest they consider campus ministry. Pepperdine University and David Lipscomb University now offer master's degree training specifically for campus ministry. In all possible situations please voice your support to build enthusiasm for campus ministry in your congregation. Finally, please join me and many other campus ministers in prayer. We ask that the Lord will use campus ministry to His glory. May our vision always be clear as to how God can use the campus ministry.

Bailey Forrest serves in the campus ministry of the Brooks Ave. church in Raleigh, NC. After being in the campus ministry at North Carolina State University, Bailey later committed to serve the Lord as a campus minister. He has now served in that capacity for ten years.

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Nations University

MAC LYNN

When one think of a mission field, one may think of a single state, country, or people. Regardless of how one thinks about it, that "world" is foreboding. People are everywhere. Unrighteousness pervades every society. And a spirit of self-gratification runs rampant. How can the Christian be faithful to his or her calling? How can a single man or woman make much difference?

To be sure, loyalty to God embraces faithfulness to his cause. Beyond a life which reveals the indwelling Christ, verbal proclamation becomes essential. The amount of diversity of mission-related activity that is presently going on worldwide is phenomenal. Many Christians are risking personal health and spending their resources to serve in foreign lands. These include doctors, nurses, dentists, teachers, and business professionals of all walks of life. An unprecedented number of Americans are now traveling abroad to preach and teach the gospel on both short and long-term ventures. The Good News is being broadcast over radio and television, sent out through thousands of correspondence courses, and taught one-on-one in every conceivable place. It is astonishing what people will do for the praise of God when they love the Lord more than they love life!

In addition to all the good activity taking place worldwide, this article introduces the reader to yet another. This venture involves a formalized program of instruction at a college level. It entails making education available to persons who might not be reached through present means. It focuses on helping one person make a difference. The project is called Nations University.

> To be sure, loyalty to God embraces faithfulness to his cause.

Nations University is a developing "school without walls." Having established a home base in Louisiana at the White's Ferry Road church facility, NU has already begun dispensing free educational services around the world. Incorporation is underway and application has been filed with the Louisiana Board of Regents for permission to grant degrees. About 200 Christian professionals have already been enlisted to provide service through the university.

Purpose and Mission Statement

The foremost purpose of Nations University is to assist the church in its mission to carry out the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) through a form similar to that practiced by the apostle Paul in the city of Ephesus (Acts 19:9-10). To accomplish its purpose, Nations University intends to provide:

- Worldwide educational services through Christian professionals who arrange for their own expenses.
- A forum for mission strategy, mission preparation, and spiritual development.
- Spiritual nurture and leadership de-

velopment for nationals throughout the world.

- Special programs in places where Christian missionaries and the open teaching of the gospel are forbidden.
- Enhancement to existing educational enterprises through cooperative arrangements.

When fully operational, Nations University envisions fulfilling its mission through three avenues: (1) a degree program, (2) a research program, and (3) an enhancement program.

Degree Program. The university is pursuing an opportunity to provide a formalized system for developing competency in several areas of Christian service. Hopefully, two degree programs—a bachelor's and a master's degree in religious studies—will have been launched in August. The connection between professors and students will be accomplished through a combination of media—electronic, written, and personal encounter—without expensive residency requirements.

Research Program. Research projects envisioned by Nations University fall into two categories: (1) instruction related and (2) community related. Instruction-related research projects will aim at improving missionary effectiveness within a foreign culture. Community-related projects will aim at identifying specific human needs that can e served by the church or by Nations University.

Enrichment Program. Special non-credit educational offerings provide access to unique audiences and become a means of contributing to general public welfare. Outside the U.S. the university plans services in agriculture, business, and the health sciences, as well as in Bible. This program is sometimes conducted in association with national universities and Christian schools.

Administrative personnel of Nations University are Richard N. Ady, President; Mac Lynn, Administrator; and Carson E. Reed, Vice-President for the Enhancement Program. The home office is 3201 N. 7th Street, West Monroe, LA 71291-2229. Office of the Administrator is 5533 Saddlewood Lane, Brentwood, TN 37207-4739 (Phone 615/371-9233; Fax 615/371-8705; E-mail lynnjm@dlu.edu).

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Untitled

Too easily we go through life
not seeing all there is—
the Power of the mighty God,
the reigning Lord who lives.
We take His blessing all in stride,
for-granted and forgot,
and all His little miracles
too oft we see them not.

Oh God, please give a grateful heart
to your child now.
Teach me to be thankful, Lord
and at your feet to bow.

— Sarah den Hollander

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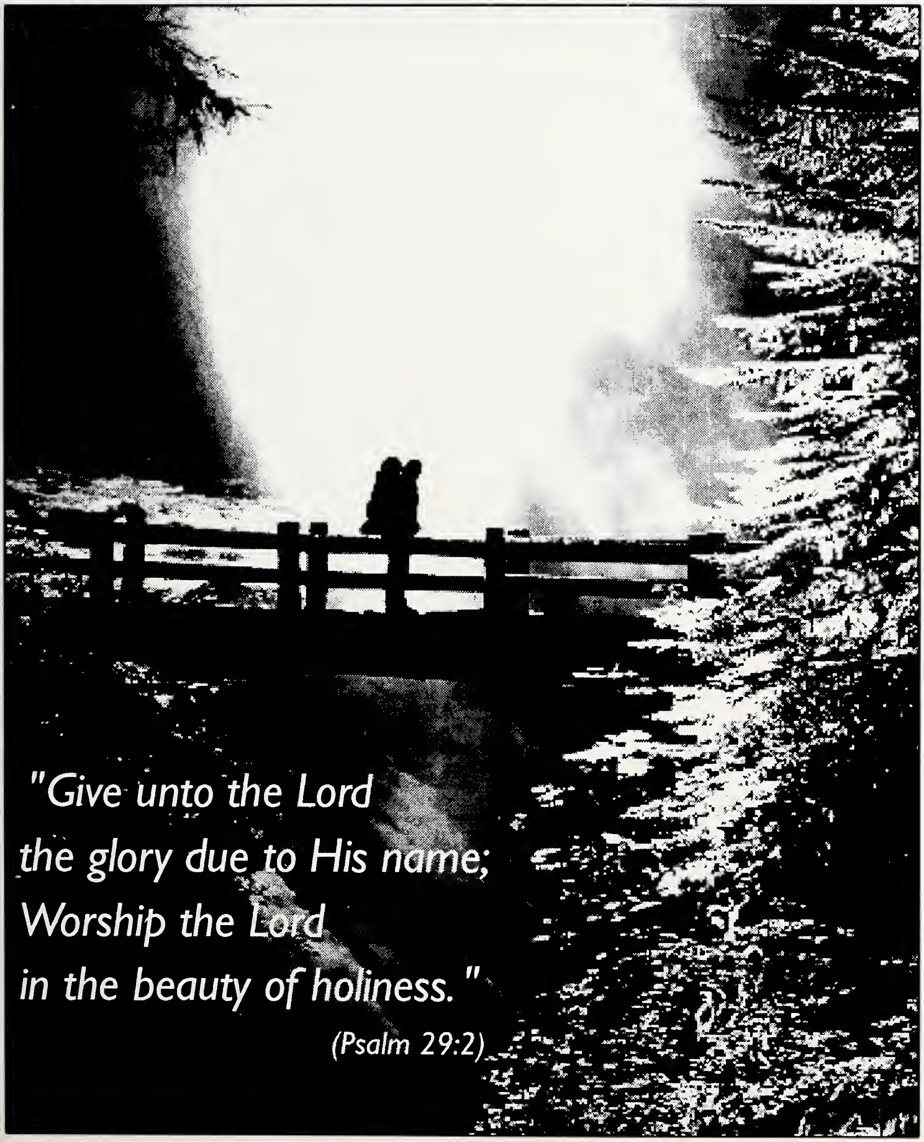
VOL. 38 NO. 10

OCTOBER 1996

CAROLINA christian



"Give unto the Lord
the glory due to His name;
Worship the Lord
in the beauty of holiness."
(Psalm 29:2)

CAROLINA christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
EDITORIAL
& PUBLICATION STAFF
Dennis Conner, Editor
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
Jim Mullican, Associate Editor
Michael Mobley, News Editor
Amy Love, Design Editor

CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Rd., Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: Individual–$10/year ($18/2 years and $26/3 years); club of five or more–$9 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles–60¢/copy/month; church mailing list (minimum 15) 75¢/copy/month. Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes
with Form 3579 to:

Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739
Address editorial matter to:
Dennis Conner
PO Box 1369
Yadkinville, NC 27055-1369
Address news items to:
Michael Mobley
301 Reed Creek Rd.
Mooresville, NC 28115

Address commercial advertising
inquiries to:
Jacobs List, Inc.
PO Box 120
Clinton, SC 29325

Address all advertising pertaining to the churches of Christ or its members (including related organization) to the editor.

All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceding month.

CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
PUBLICATIONS, INC.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS:
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Editorial:

The Garden

DENNIS CONNER

It was all about faithfulness that night—theirs, ours, and His. Earlier in the evening Peter had boldly but impulsively proclaimed, "Lord, we will go anywhere with you. We will even die with you!" At that moment Peter would have gladly stood in the assembly with us and sung as loudly and sincerely as the rest of us Ms. Potter's well known hymn, *I'll Never Forsake My Lord*. Can't you just hear him over there in the bass section along with James and John singing, "Tho' my cross may be hard to bear…I'll never forsake my Lord!" But forsake Him they did. You can read the story in Mark 14:27-52. Then after reading it perhaps you will be led to confess, as I have, that you have even lived it.

Jesus had been to the garden before, but this time it was different. This time He went to the garden not only under the darkness of night, but under the darkness of impending death. The cross was only hours away. The scene derives its power not only from the glimpse it provides us into the soul of Christ, but also from the contrast between human abandonment and divine faithfulness. In the disciples we may very easily see ourselves, full of pious professions and strong intentions, but in the critical moments of discipleship often weak and unreliable. On the other hand, the weak faith of the disciples that night provides a backdrop for the display of the costly faithfulness of Jesus. This tension between the disciples' faithlessness and Christ's faithfulness is a key to the meaning of Gethsemane for our discipleship today.

The theme of abandonment is expressed in three ways. The first is *apathy*. After praying the first time Jesus returned to Peter, James and John and found them asleep. A gentle, but firm, rebuke is issued to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour?" After returning to the recesses of the garden to pray a second time, the disciples are caught napping a second time and can only respond with embarrassed silence. Surely they would not repeat their insensitive blunder, but Mark says that He came to them a third time only to be greeted by the same sight. On this night when by His own admission the soul of the Lord was sorrowful even unto death, the disciples were found literally asleep. Of course there were physical factors that contributed to this. They had been traveling back and forth between Bethany and Jerusalem, it was an eventful week, and they were physically and emotionally spent. Those factors notwithstanding, Jesus still expressed His disappointment in their failure to be there for Him in this critical moment. Their apathy frustrated Jesus.

How many times does the Lord find us napping spiritually when He needs us the most? We may not think of apathy as overt abandonment, but it is faithlessness all the same in that it keeps us from delivering in the critical moments of discipleship.

Then there is *betrayal*. This was Judas, and we have come to despise him for it. This is the way of the self–serving heart at its very worst. And don't we just delight in condemning him! But lest our pious delight evolve into damning self–righteousness, let us turn the light of self–investigation on ourselves. How often have we professed to be the friend of Jesus, His committed and devoted follower, only to resort to methods of self–preservation and self-promotion when our discipleship calls for us to take a stand for Christ? How often have we laughed with the world to gain its approval? How often have we kept silent because we did not want to pay the price for speaking out? How often…and all the while claiming to be Jesus' friend?

And finally, we see the disciples, all of them, *fleeing in a time of spiritual pressure.* When Jesus is arrested, "they all forsook Him and fled." How could they? Simple. They were afraid andconfused. The pressure was on and they ran from it. And so have we. When we compromise in order to escape the pressure, we abandon Christ. When we succumb to circumstances instead of trusting Christ in faith, He is abandoned.

Then, in contrast to the faithlessness of the disciples in Gethsemane stands the costly faithfulness of Jesus. In the garden we see Jesus in His finest and most inspiring hour short of the cross itself. We see Him struggling with the incomprehensible burden of becoming the sin–offering for all humanity, and at the center of that struggle is his remarkable prayer.

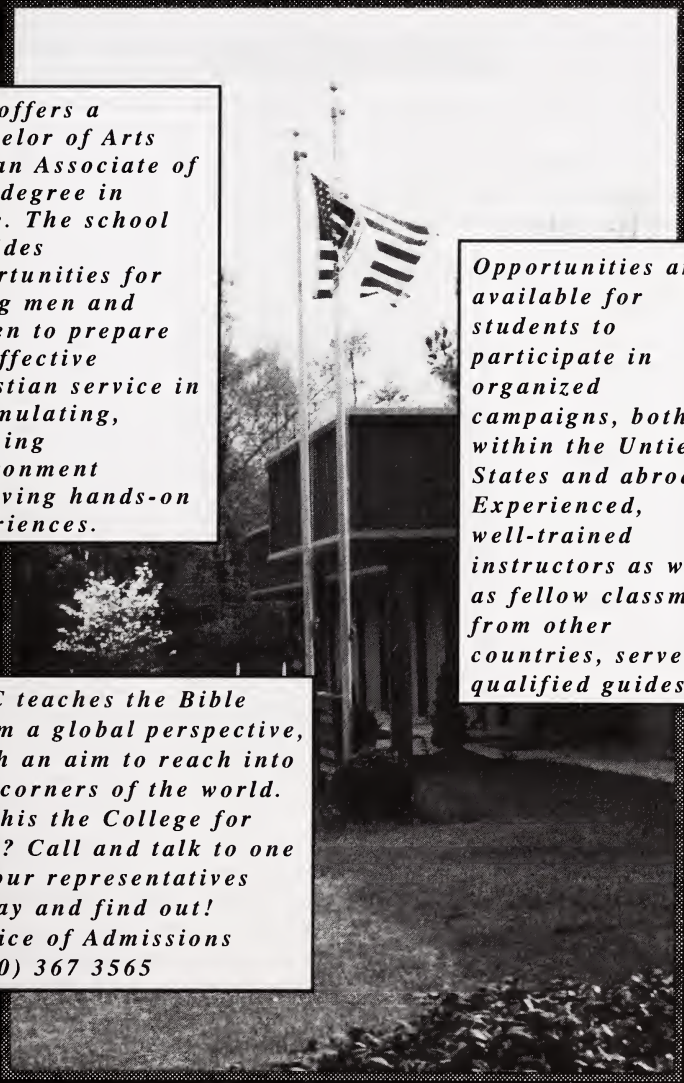
The prayer is natural, intense, and straight from His troubled heart. The petition, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from me…" should not surprise or confound us. It was not death that He shrunk from; rather, it was the burden of the sins of all humanity being placed squarely on Him, the holy wrath of His Father, and all the attendant consequences that led Jesus to make such a plea. No, it should not surprise us that our Lord asked such a thing. To ask for anything other than deliverance would have been the surprise.

Petition is then followed by submission, "…nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will." I wonder if we shall ever grasp the sheer courage of those words. Such a prayer has never escaped human lips before or since. In those words of submission we again see the abandonment theme at work in Gethsemane, but this time it is the positive self–abandonment of Christ as He chooses to be faithful to the will of God. And it is in that faithfulness that the victory is won. The way of the cross is chosen over the way of self–preservation, the way of grace over the way of condemnation. The message of Gethsemane for us is that *Christ refused to abandon us.*

Praise God for the faithfulness of our Lord Jesus. Others may abandon us, but Jesus never will. And we may at times abandon Him, but He will never abandon us. That's the meaning of Gethsemane.

NEWS ITEMS NEEDED

Carolina Christian has always tried to keep brethren informed regarding noteworthy news of congregations in the Carolinas, and we want to continue to do the best we can in this regard. With a volunteer staff and being a monthly publication, we do have our limits, and this is where you can help. Please arrange to have your church bulletin sent to Mike Mobley, our Brotherhood News Editor at 301 Reed Creek Rd., Mooresville, NC 28115. If you a have a congregational event or an item of note that you would like to share with the rest of us, either write brother Mobley or call him at (704) 663-6910. Special news announcements should be in to him by the tenth of the month to go in the next month's edition (for instance, items to appear in the December issue should be submitted by November 10). We appreciate any help our readers can give us in this department.



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Associate Editorial:

Changing Styles

Jim Mullican

As we look back over the years of our lives, we are all aware that the styles and fashions of this world change from one year to the next. Some are old enough to remember when flapper dresses were stylish. I can remember when a well–dressed man or woman wore a hat outdoors and no woman went to worship without wearing both a hat and gloves. We've seen skirts go from the mini to the maxi and back to the mini, and who knows what will be next?

Nehru jackets and leisure suits for men were once the style. Bell bottom pants and paisley shirts were the "must have" fashion when I was in college. Remember when long sideburns were stylish in the late 60's and 70's? In the early 80's many men wore gold neck chains. We may also remember penny loafers, wide belts, double knit, bouffant hair styles, patterned and colored hose on women, and purple cars. I still have a "smiley face" lapel pin in the box with my cufflinks and tie pins. And oh, do you remember purses made of ice cream sticks? Do any of you men still have a pair of white dress shoes stuck away in the closet? They were "in" about the same time as double knit leisure suits.

If the past is any indicator, twenty years from now teenagers will giggle over pictures of their fathers wearing earrings, a bowl cut and a cap turned backwards. Our own two teenagers think the bell bottoms we once wore at the pit of bad taste but twenty–five years ago they would have wanted nothing else.

> "What is my point in this review of changing styles? Just this: 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever' (Heb. 13:8)."

What is my point in this review of changing styles? Just this, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). Hair styles, clothing styles, and automobiles may change, but right and wrong do not. The church of Christ is here to shine God's eternal light into a world darkened by sin and to guide to safety those willing to leave the ways of the world. If we ever start to compromise with the world we will cease to be the church of God, and He will find others to do His work. In his last letter, Paul writes, "Nevertheless, God's solid foundations stands firm, sealed with this inscription: 'The Lord knows who are his,' and 'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness' " (2 Tim. 2:19). The world will continue to change, but God's truth does not and that truth must be our guide.

Correction

The correct zip code for the North Raleigh church is 27615, not 272615 as reported in last month's isue.

Courage

PETER RODE

During his years as premier of the Soviet Union, Nikita Krushchev denounced many of the policies and atrocities of Joseph Stalin. Once as he censured Stalin at a public meeting, Krushchev was interrupted by a heckler in the audience who shouted, "You were one of Stalin's colleagues. Why didn't you stop him?"

"Who said that?" roared Krushchev. An agonizing silence followed and nobody in the room dared move a muscle or speak.

Then Krushchev replied, "Now you know why."

> "One of the traits a disciple of Jesus needs is courage."

Eddie Rickenbacker once said, "Courage is doing what you're afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you're scared." The heckler was lacking in courage.

One of the traits a disciple of Jesus Christ needs is courage. Timothy was a young evangelist left in Ephesus to help straighten out some problems, correct some shortcomings, and help the church in that city to mature (1 Tim. 1:3; 3:15). However, Timothy, perhaps due to his age, seemed to have become overwhelmed with the situation he was placed in. In addition, the problem was compounded by having his mentor, Paul, in jail. Because of these circumstances Timothy became discouraged to the point where Paul had to write and encourage him to "...fan into flame the gift of God" which he had received. Paul continued by reminding his young friend that God had not given him "...a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline" (2 Tim. 1:6-7). Timothy needed to display courage, and with the help of the Spirit he could.

Peter was a disciple of Jesus who was quite outspoken, in many ways impetuous, and in all his actions enthusiastic. However, his enthusiasm could not carry him through the night of testing he underwent while Jesus was in the palace of the high priest after being betrayed by Judas. Duringthat time, as you recall, he denied Jesus three times. Earlier he had spoken boldly when he was still in the presence of Jesus and the other apostles, but there he was in the company of friends. When faced with a real test, however, fear won out over courage.

Later on, however, after having received the Holy Spirit, Peter was able to boldly stand before the Sanhedrin and proclaim Jesus as the Christ. It was then that the Sanhedrin sat up and took note of his courage and realized that he had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

We have received that same spirit from God and we are filled with the same power to live the Christian life, stand up for what is right, and make a difference in our communities (Eph. 3:16; 6:10). My prayer is that we all will allow God to work in and through us to display the courage needed to stand against evil. Keep the faith!

Peter Rode serves as one of the ministers to the Friendly Ave. Church of Christ in Greensboro, NC. He may be contacted at 5101 W. Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410.

Why Study Issues

Paul Jarrett

This year I began using the fourth Sunday evening of the month to address various issues which often trouble the church. In deciding to enter into this study I had to give some thought to the question which serves as the title for this article. I would like to share with you some of my conclusions as to why we should study issues and how to go about it effectively.

> "It seems obvious to me that it is not issues which divide us. Rather, it is those bad attitudes which prevent us from discussing our differences in a constructive manner."

First, let me offer three reasons which should *not* lead us to focus on issues: a desire to pass judgment on other people's views (Rom. 14:1); a morbid fascination with controversy (2 Timothy 2:14, 23; Titus 3:9-11); an emphasis which leads to the neglect of more important matters (2 Tim. 2:15, 16, 23-26; Titus 3:8).

Now, having noted why we should not study issues, let me suggest four reasons why we should.

First, *out of loyalty to our heritage.* Churches of Christ have traditionally sought to follow the example of the noble–minded Bereans who were willing to listen to Paul and then search the Scriptures to determine the truth (Acts 17:11). From my youth I have always thrilled at the idea that we are a people who are willing to examine our faith and stand corrected if shown to be wrong.

Second, *because of a desire for more accurate understanding.* Whether it pertains to our personal spiritual growth (Heb. 5:12-14), or encouraging others to grow in their faith (2 Tim. 2:25; Acts 18:24-26), we should always be willing to seek a more accurate understanding of God's revelation. We should thrill at the opportunity to gain new insight (Luke 24:32).

Third, *to promote the unity of faith.* In Ephesians 4:11-13 Paul makes it plain that those who provide instruction to God's people are to seek to promote the unity of the faith which comes about as one matures in his understanding of God's will. No doubt God wants His people to be in agreement. When differences arise our unity may very well be threatened. Thus, we need to be able to follow the example of the early church when they met in Jerusalem (Acts 15) to discuss their differences on a matter and come to a common conclusion.

Fourth, *to promote understanding and forbearance.* While our ultimate aim should be to speak the same things, the Scriptures provide us with clear examples of the fact that such unity of faith may not come quickly or easily. In this case, however, it is still beneficial for us to discuss issues in order to better understand one another's positions and to encourage greater patience and forbearance in love. This seems to be Paul's chief concern in Romans 14:1-15:7 and I Corinthians 8:1-13 when he called attention to some of the issues which were troubling the first centurychurch.

Despite what I believe to be four valid reasons for discussing issues, it is my experience that many of us tend to go to one of two extremes when it comes to such matters. Either we avoid any discussion of issues whatsoever, or we talk about little else but issues. Let me conclude by noting what I see to be four real barriers to encouraging all of God's people to enter into a meaningful and productive discussion of issues.

The first barrier is *the absence of the unity of the Spirit.* Before we can hope to achieve the unity of faith which comes with Christian growth, we must possess and preserve the unity of the Spirit that is ours by the grace of God. This unity of the spirit manifests itself in "humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love." In the absence of this unity any discussion of issues will end in conflict rather than peace.

A second barrier is *arrogance.* This single word may very well be descriptive of the greatest barrier to a productive discussion of issues. I feat that our willingness to search the Scriptures has often given way to an arrogance not unlike that which Job attributed to his friends when he chided them saying, "Truly then you are the people, and with you wisdom will die." We may sometimes need to be reminded as Job reminded his friends that others also have intelligence (see Job 12:1-3). The words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:1-3 need to be imprinted on our minds and hearts. He wrote, "...we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him."

Growing out of this, *focus on knowledge instead of love* presents a third barrier to productive discussion. Issues divide us when our focus is on knowledge, rather than love. We need to be reminded of the fact that even if we "know all mysteries and all knowledge...but do not have love (we) are nothing," (1 Cor. 13:2). I for one am thankful that our salvation is not dependent on perfect knowledge any more than it depends on perfect performance, because I am not perfect in knowledge any more than I am in performance. Unfortunately, I fear that some are not willing to acknowledge their imperfections.

And fourth, *a focus on men* can be a tremendous barrier to productive discussions. This barrier is as old as the church itself. In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul deals extensively with how fleshly Christians exhibited their lack of spirituality by means of the jealousy and strife which resulted from their following men. Issues have divided our brotherhood repeatedly when men of reputation attract a following who view their position as the final word on some issue. The only cure for this is for all of us to realize that Christ is our only teacher. While we may benefit from the insights of our fellow disciples, we must never fail to focus on Jesus.

It seems obvious to me that it is not issues which divide us. Rather, it is those bad attitudes which prevent us from addressing our differences in a constructive manner. There are valid reasons for studying issues, the most important of which may be that if we could earn to discuss our differences positively we might also be forced to learn how to love each other as we ought.

Paul Jarrett preaches for the Archdale Church of Christ in Charlotte, NC. You can write to him at 1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210.

Goodness

Amos Allen

As a Christian who studies the Scriptures and works to help other Christians, I sometimes find it all overwhelming. There seems to be so much to do, to know and to be.Sometimes it's hard to be a good, consistent Christian. The book of Titus, though, offers some help and encouragement.

> "So, where do we find the incentive and strength to do good? Answer: the grace of God."

Titus was on the island of Crete helping churches that appear to have been newly established. Paul wrote in order to remind his young friend of some important life principles that needed to be taught to these believers. These instructions have often given me a great deal of encouragement in my struggle to be good.

Paul told Titus to teach the people to do two things. The first was: do good. Older men and women were to *do good.* Young women and men were to *do good.* Even slaves were to *do good.*

Paul gives a few details about what "good" looks like, but not many. Even those who were to be servant–leaders of the churches were given guidelines that essentially have to do with goodness. The people of Crete had a reputation for being lazy gluttons, evil brutes and constant liars. Paul agreed with this assessment (Titus 1:12-13). Therefore, Titus was urged to motivate the Christians to work against their reputation by doing good.

The other thing Titus encouraged was self–control. In the society of that day and place, at that time in history, self–control was evidently not widely practiced. It affected their relationships, their work habits, their thinking, and their morals. As a Cretan, people expected you to be mean and troublesome. Titus' job was to teach and show them that they were no longer Cretans, but Cretan Christians. There was a big difference, and to be a Christian in Crete was going to take some big changes. Practicing self–control would not be easy, just as becoming self–controlled to do good is not the easiest thing I have ever had to do, either.

Self–control isn't easy for any of us. How do you practice sobriety when many around you constantly get drunk? How do you remain married and chaste when no one else seems to? How do you refrain from gossip when it is the favorite pastime of all your friends? How do you submit to your husband, or be sensitive to your wife, when others scoff at the idea? My older brother had a job in a small clothing store when we lived in Florida. Others told him it was customary to steal from an employer, and they wondered how could he not hold to the custom?

So where do we find the incentive and strength to be good? Answer: the grace of God. As Paul put it, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self–controlled and godly lives in this present age...But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life...And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good" (Titus 2:11-12; 3:4-8). Paul has the idea that the grace of God makes everything different. When we have been redeemed from wickedness, washed clean, renewed by the Holy Spirit, and given the hope of eternal life, we will be motivated to control our desires and do good. Grace teaches us to reject others' expectations as our guide. It trains us to turn away from every evil and turn toward what is godly. God's grace must be powerful if it could help even the Cretans! Can't it do the same for us?

Grace is sometime utilitarian; in other words, it works. Homes will become a place where people are safe and have what they need. Men and women become honorable when trained by grace. And yet, grace will change you so that others mock and distance themselves from you. At those times it won't look like it's working, but it is. Just remember your hope.

May the grace of Christ be with us all. May it help us to be good.

Amos Allen preaches for the Meadowbrook Rd. Church of Christ in Asheboro, NC. You may contact him at 631 Meadowbrook Rd., Asheboro, NC 27203.

Life

By Mike Mobley

Life! For some it is a gigantic puzzle, a matter of fitting the right pieces in the right places. For others it is a mystery, a search for answers that just never seem to be forthcoming. For others still it is a journey from one deed done and one circumstance to another, though we never quite seem to arrive. For everyone, life is a challenge to grow from what has been through what is now to what is yet possible.

In His holy word, God describes life in a variety of ways: life is like a race, a vapor, a withering grass. All of these are God's way of teaching us about the temporal nature of life and the need to live our lives devoted to preparing for what lies ahead—eternity. Therefore, our lives must be devoted to what is most important, to what will give us the only pleasure and fulfillment that is real and eternal, to that effort which is most noble because it leads us to endless life.

Whatever we do with our lives, the only thing that really matters is one's relationship with God and the influence we have on the lives of others (Matt. 22:37-40; Luke 10:25-37). As a parent, a spouse, a child, a friend, a co-worker, a fellow Christian, or whatever our relationships and duties in life, this love for God will give your life and mine the greatest challenge and fulfillment possible. This love for God and others is what life is all about.

After nearly twenty years in preaching, Mike now serves God as a teacher working with troubled juveniles at the Jackson Training Center in Concord, NC. You can write to him at 301 Reed Creek Rd., Mooresville, NC 28115.

The Forgotten Member of the Trinity

Robert A. MacDonald

We all say that we believe in and revere the Trinity, the One God in three persons. In practice, however, the so-called "Trinity" for many is only two–fold: God and Jesus. The Holy Spirit is seldom mentioned and spoken of comfortably, and then often only at baptism. Why do so many of us choose not to glorify the third person of the Trinity? Why do we not spend as much time studying and talking about Him in classes as we do the Father and the Son? Despite the fact that the person and work of the Spirit are mentioned hundreds of times in the Bible, we don't spend much time studying Him. Why? Perhaps there is a historical reason.

Some may remember that in the 1950's most of our leaders reacted similarly to a popular teaching making inroads into the brotherhood and developed a fear of being labeled "charismatic." Thereafter most church leaders said little about the Holy Spirit from the pulpit or in classes. Does it still frighten some of us today to speak boldly of God's Holy Spirit? It shouldn't.

The fact that the "charismatic movement" may err in its doctrine and understanding of the Holy Spirit does not justify our error of neglecting Him. We err when our fear and lack of understanding causes us to be timidly silent. As a result of such neglect, ignorance about the Holy Spirit flourishes.

We often speak joyously about the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self–control (Gal. 5:22). However, too often we stop short. For instance, John wrote in 1 John 3:24, "Those who obey His [God's] commands, live in Him and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us. We know it by the Spirit He gave us." The Holy Spirit gives us assurance of our mutual abiding with God. And Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" What a comforting truth! The Holy Spirit indwells us. The message is clear: if we obey God, He places His Holy Spirit within us. Thus, what care and discipline we should exercise. Yet, this is an often neglected truth for many. Because of this neglect many experience a lack of comfort and awe. Since God's Holy Spirit can be in us, God knows our needs.

There is more. The Holy Spirit is in us as a deposit toward our inheritance. In Ephesians 1:13-14 Paul wrote, "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory." Let us hear and believe these Scriptures which explain a vital function of God's Holy Spirit in us. Let us teach joyously that God's Spirit is in us as a deposit until we are redeemed. This thought should cause us to be excited! But can we be excited without being charged as "charismatics?"

Many of us have erred by not stressing with joy that the Spirit of God is in us. Will we comfortably sing the hymns about the Spirit? Will we preach and teach about Him more? Will we confess our neglect of Him? Will we personally grow spiritually, seeking God's help through His Holy Spirit?

"We know that we live in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:13).

Though in his 80's brother MacDonald continues to actively serve the Lord and study His holy Scriptures. He may be contacted at 600 Carolina Village Rd. #31, Hendersonville, NC 28792.

Why Did God Establish the Church

TIM SENSING

Who can know the mind of God? I can. And you can. At least we can know as much as He has declared to us through His revealed will. The letter of Paul to the Ephesians expresses clearly many of the mysteries of God that had previously been kept secret. God made those mysteries known to Paul who in turn wrote them down for us so that we could tell others, and the revealing of those mysteries involves the reason for the church's very existence.

> **"The church is God's centerpiece of creation designed to fulfill His ultimate purpose."**

In Ephesians 1:9 Paul wrote, "He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ." Why? Why did God reveal His will to us? Allow me to share with you two of the reasons which Paul gave.

First, God did this "in order that we might be for the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:12). God has chosen us because of His great love for us, even when we were unlovely. This is an act God has taken by His own initiative, not because of anything we have done or said so that we could boast. We usually emphasize, and correctly so, our need for the redemption He provides because of our own sin. However, God had even higher purposes in mind for saving us. Not only does redemption bring to life that which was dead, but God has also redeemed us from our empty ways for the fulfillment of His original purposes. We were chosen not just to tell of God's glory or sing about God's glory, but were chosen before creation to *be* the praise of His glory.

When all of God's enemies gather around the church and see what God has done through us and for us, they all gasp with awe due to His power and love for us. Look into the faces of your brothers and sisters. See what a mighty and powerful God has accomplished! We exist as His trophy of honor magnifying His name.

Being the elect of God has its privileges, but it also has its responsibilities. Would the enemies of Israel envy them for this election? Israel suffered greatly throughout her history because of her unique status of being God's elect. Jesus was God's elect, and His election meant bearing a cross. Crosses are often given to elect ones. Being of God's elect for the purpose of being God's praise summons us all to live holy and blameless lives.

Why did God reveal His will to us? A second reason provided by Paul is this, "Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me be revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit of God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus...This grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make

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plain to everyone the administration of this mystery which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. **His intent** was that now, **through the church**, the many sided wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord..." (Eph. 3:2-13).

Did you catch what God's intent is? God's intent is accomplished in the church—which is us! As you live each day as God's praise, as you fellowship with one another, as you tell lost souls about God's secret, you are accomplishing God's purposes. When all the forces that exist in the spiritualrealms look upon the church, they will see the infinite wisdom of God. using a cross to redeem sinful people so that they could then successfully fulfill the will of God seems foolish on the surface, but when you see God's church—redeemed men and women in Christ by grace who live only to serve the Creator—then God's wisdom is seen in all its beauty and splendor. God is no fool. The church proves that.

So don't let anyone put down God's church. Don't live in a way that would bring reproach upon God's church. The church is God's centerpiece of creation designed to fulfill His ultimate purpose. The church represents the redemptive mystery of God now made known for all. Let us all do and be what He intended.

Now you know why God established the church. It was something He did for Himself, "To the praise of his glory."

Tim Sensing now preaches for the Lexington Church of Christ located at 649 Barr Rd., Lexington, SC. You may contact him care of the church.

Church Spotlight:

New Church in Charlotte Begins Campus Ministry

Doug Vogel

Brent Brady, Bill Butterfield and Stephen Mathis were three Abilene Christian University students with a dream to plan a domestic mission church in an urban setting. Through extensive research, prayer and the help of God the three chose north Charlotte as a high priority church planting area.

In June of 1995 these men and their families (nine people all together) moved to Charlotte. The North Charlotte Church of Christ began meeting in a large subdivision clubhouse on Sundays and Wednesday nights. In February of this year they moved Sunday morning services to the Hickory Grove Elementary School located in northeast Charlotte. The church has since grown to sixty members and now meets for small groups on Wednesdays in three different homes.

Financial support for this new church has come from congregations and individuals across the country. Out of the three who moved to Charlotte, Brady is the only one blessed to continue in ministry full-time.

The church has recently composed a mission statement focusing on outreach and identifies three primary areas of outreach: the implementation of an effective campus outreach, centered primarily at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte; young couples and families with little or no church background; and the reclamation of people who have left the churches of Christ.

The North Charlotte church is strategically located in a young, suburban part of town that is ripe with young families for the harvest. It is also located near the campus of UNC-C. The church has been effectively reaching out to young families by hosting a monthly parents night out on Fridays at the same clubhouse where they began meeting. This past July a delegation from a congregation in Abilene came and held a living Vacation Bible School which generated contacts with over twenty unchurched families. More recently the church has begun implementing a campus ministry at UNC-C.

It is for the purpose of developing the campus ministry that Doug Vogel and his family are returning to North Carolina (he had previously lived in Shalotte, NC, for eight years). There are 17,000 students at UNC-C and about one hundred of them list the Church of Christ as their religious preference. The Vogels are very excited about reaching these students for Christ and plan to live close to the university. Their sponsoring congregation in this effort is the Hendersonville church in Hendersonville, NC. The Vogels are moving from Texas to NorthCarolina and will live in Hendersonville until their finances will allow them to move to Charlotte (Lord willing, no later than the first of the year).

Christians in the Carolinas are asked to keep this young congregation and new campus ministry in their prayers.

For more information on the North Charlotte Church of Christ contact Brent Brady at 3612 mallard Cove Court, Charlotte, NC 28269. Brother Brady's phone number is (704) 596-9360. For information regarding support of the new campus ministry contact the Hendersonville Church of Christ at 1975 Haywood Rd., Hendersonville, NC 28739, or call (704) 692-0306.

Unity According to Authority

WELLINGTON SMITH

The challenge of following Jesus without denominationalism to a great extent revolves around the problem of religious division that begins in the local church. Every denomination today began as a result of religious division. And religious division normally finds it origin with brethren in a local congregation unable to resolve their differences. While having the same standard of authority is essential to unity in religious matters, I believe that it alone is insufficient, as suggested in this quote by Barton W. Stone: "But should all the professors of Christianity reject all their various creeds and names, and agree to receive the Bible alone, and be called by no other name than Christian, will this unite them? No, we are fully convinced that unless they all possess the spirit of that book and name they are far, very far, from Christian union" (as quoted by J. M. Powell, *The Cause We Plead: A Story Of The Restoration Movement*, 20th Century Christian, 1987, p. 56)

> "...Religious division normally finds its origin with brethren in a local congregation unable to resolve their differences."

It is essential that those who seek to allow the Bible, and in particular the New Testament, to be their standard of authority possess the proper Christian attitudes and to apply those attitudes when handling the Word of God. Otherwise, the "sword of the Spirit" (Ep 6:17) will be abused to the detriment of all parties involved. In this article we shall examine how Paul dealt with the problem of division in the early church—and the solution he offered—so that we might "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

A Major Cause of Division

In the situation at Corinth Paul found it necessary to write "that there be no divisions among you" (1Cor. 1:10). There were contentions among them, manifested by breaking up into parties and calling themselves after different men (1 Cor. 1:11-12). Sounds a lot like religious division today, doesn't it? As Paul wrote to them he realized he was dealing with babes in Christ who instead of being "spiritual" were "carnal" (1 Cor. 3:1-3a). Indeed, the root of their envy, strife, and divisions was their carnality (1 Cor. 3:3b).

Conditions today are not really all that much different; where division exists, carnality (or spiritual immaturity) is often a major cause of the problem! This is not to say that there are never any substantive issues at stake when division occurs. But any hope for resolving differences over such issues is stifled when the parties involved are filled with envy and strife. This may help us appreciate why Paul so frequently focused his attention on the development of attitudes which increase the likelihood of overcoming differences so that unity might prevail. Let's take a look at these.

Attitudes For Maintaining Unity

To the church at Ephesus Paul taught the virtue of "lowliness" (Ep 4:2), which is the posession of a humble opinion about one's self. Without this virtue, members in the body tend to think first and foremost of their own needs and desires. Paul also taught “gentleness” (Ep 4:2), or meekness. It is not a quality of weakness, but of power under control. Moses was a meek man (Num 12:3), but was capable of great strength and boldness. Jesus was “meek and lowly in heart” (Mt 11:29), but we see where He drove the money changers out of the temple. Thus gentleness is the ability to bring my will and my strength under control as I subject my will to that of another. “Long-suffering” (Ep 4:2) is essential according to Paul. The idea here is one of patience, forbearance, longsuffering, slowness in avenging wrongs. When the body consists of members who are not perfect, and often sin against each other, maintaining unity is not possible unless they are willing to endure each other’s imperfections. “Bearing with one another in love” (Ep 4:2), which is similar to longsuffering. “Bearing” means to sustain, to bear, to endure. What makes such “longsuffering” and “forbearance” possible is another virtue— “love.”

As Paul wrote in his chapter on love, “love suffers long... is not provoked” (1 Cor. 13:4-5). Indeed, the virtue of love is the tie that binds all these virtues together (Col. 3:12-14). Paul further writes “endeavor” (Eph. 4:3). Displaying these virtues does not come naturally nor easy, nor does maintaining unity. Thus the need for much effort, as Paul here uses a word which means “to exert one’s self, to give diligence.” Only by giving diligence to display *all* these virtues can we hope to “keep (maintain) the unity of the Spirit in the bondof peace” (Eph. 4:3).

In addition Paul directed the church at Philippi, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit” (Phil. 2:3). It is necessary to point out those attitudes we should *not* have, for possessing these attitudes will destroy unity. Both involve “self-centered” attitude rather than a “Christ-centered” attitude. Therefore, it is required that we rid ourselves of the desire for exalting self (selfish ambition), and the improper estimation of self (conceit). In place of these, we should substitute “lowliness of mind” (Phil. 2:3). In other words, humility. This will effectively replace the problem of conceit. Humility should be easy to maintain if we remember our own faults and “let each esteem others better than himself” (Phil. 2:3). As we seek

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humility we must be aware of our own defects while at the same time realizing that we do not have the same clear view of the defects of others. We can only see the outward conduct of others, while in our own case we can look within. We move toward humility when see our own hearts and the faults within them recognizing at the same time that we cannot so easily look into the hearts of others.

Then, in writing to the brethren at Rome, Paul exhorted them to outdo one another in this regard: "in honor giving preference to one another" (Rom. 12:10b). Paul writes, "look out...for the interest of others" (Phil. 2:4). This attitude eliminates the problem of selfish ambition. It is the attitude of maturity, and was the attitude of Christ. So then, it should be the attitude of every Christian. As strongly suggested by Paul in Philippians 2:1-2, these qualities in verses 3-4 contribute to the unity that produces fullness of joy!

To the churches at Galatia, Paul cautioned against the improper use of our liberty in Christ. While it is true that we must stand fast in our liberty and not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1), we should also use our liberty as an opportunity to serve one another in love (Gal. 5:13-14). Otherwise, abuse of our liberty gives the flesh opportunity to destroy one another (Gal. 5:15).

In Romans Paul wrote that we should pursue things that lead to peace and edification (Rom. 14:19), that the strong should be willing to bear with the scruples of the weak (Rom. 14:1,13; 15:1-3), and that the weak in faith must be careful not to judge (condemn) those whom God has received (Rom. 14:3-4). Such attitudes are necessary, or we will not be able "with one mind and one mouth [to] glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Finally, to the church at Corinth Paul made it clear that knowledge can puff one up, but it is love that edifies ("builds up" in contrast to knowledge which "puffs up," I Cor. 8:1). He also taught that we who have liberty in Christ should be careful that we don't use it to the destruction of our brethren who are weak (I Cor. 8:9-12), and that we should therefore be willing to forego our liberties if it can help keep a brother from stumbling (cf. I Co 8:13; 10:31-11:1).

Conclusion

From personal experience I can attest that where members display these attitudes in addition to devotion to the apostles' doctrine, there will be a congregation of Christians in which love and unity will prevail. That's not to say there will always be perfect understanding and agreement on every subject. When people from every conceivable background come to Christ, we should expect some differences. When there are brethren at various levels of spiritual growth, we can expect some challenges. However, if we can agree that the teaching of Christ as expounded in the apostles' doctrine is our standard of authority in religious matters, and if we can inculcate the Christian attitudes described in this lesson into the heart of every member, then we shall be able to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" as we all continue to "grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18), to the glory of God!

Wellington Smith preaches for the Walkup Ave. church in Monroe, NC. He can be contacted at 2501 Walkup Ave., Monroe, NC 28110.

Brotherhood News

ROCK HILL, SC...After years of preparation, the Gold Hill Rd. church of Christ (a church planting by the Charlotte Ave. church in Rock Hill) began meeting in June at the Ramada Inn on Carowinds Blvd. between Rock Hill and Charlotte. At last report they had planned on moving into their new church building, located on Gold Hill Road, sometime toward the middle or end of last month. The preacher for the new church is *Jeff Trotter*, who is no stranger to this area. Jeff is a native of Rock Hill and grew up in the Charlotte Ave. church. Before coming back to South Carolina, Jeff served the church in Bristol, VA, for eleven years after graduating from Freed–Hardeman University. We will publish the address for the church as soon as we have it.

MOCKSVILLE, NC...On September 14 approximately 140 people came together at the Carolina Bible Camp & Retreat Center to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Carolina Bible Camp. During the celebration *H. R. Butler* was awarded plaque noting his devotion and dedicated service of 40 years to CBC. The camp was organized in 1956 and held its first encampment that year near Charlotte. Next year Palmetto Bible Camp will be celebrating its 30th anniversary.

CHARLOTTE, NC...The North Charlotte church of Christ recently celebrated its first year of existence. The congregation met for the first time on July 2, 1995. During the past year the church has grown from the original nine members to a present attendance of forty–five.

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)
EDITORIAL
& PUBLICATION STAFF
Dennis Conner, Editor
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
Jim Mullican, Associate Editor
Michael Mobley, News Editor
Amy Love, Design Editor
CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Rd., Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: Individual–$10/year ($18/2 years and $26/3 years); club of five or more–$9 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles–60¢/copy/month; church mailing list (minimum 15) 75¢/copy/month. Second-Class postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes
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Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
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All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceding month.

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DENNIS CONNER

With this issue I complete my first year as editor of *Carolina Christian* and would ask that you indulge me for a moment of reflection and thanks.

Prior to Johnny Melton's move to Mississippi I had appointed a search committee to find a suitable successor. When the committee first recommended me to the board as the next editor, I was not altogether thrilled. There had been a time in my life when the thought appealed to me, but mostly for the wrong reasons. A year ago the thought did not appeal to me nearly as much and I reluctantly agreed to serve as the interim editor. Why the hesitation? Time constraints, for one reason. However, we have found a way to deal with those and the volunteer staff have all been tremendous in helping to relieve some of that burden. The fear of criticism, for another. Contrary to what some may think, I do not delight in controversy and in having stones throne at my glass house. I do not know an editor anywhere who has not been criticized or judged for some of the things he has written (brother Howard Winters was once ostracized by many brethren for an incidental comment he made in a book review). It's a lot easier being on the other side of the printed page, and it was certainly more comfortable for me to be the critic (which I too often was) than the one criticized. Frankly, I felt that I just didn't need the grief.

Despite these concerns I accepted their appointment. Why? Several reasons. One, I believe in the ministry of *Carolina Christian*. It has a long and respected tradition and I wanted to see that tradition continued and possibly even enhanced. While God can certainly get along very well without this or any other magazine, there is a place for the printed page in promoting the cause of Christ and edifying the brethren. We simply want to be used by God in both of those ways.

Another reason was because of my love and respect for the late Howard Winters, a close friend and mentor to me as a young preacher. While Howard was not the founding editor of *Carolina Christian*, it was under his leadership and writing that the magazine reached the position of influence and respect that it did. The peak readership occurred under his 17 year term as editor. I sincerely wanted to undertake this work as my gift to Howard's memory.

And a third reason was because the committee couldn't find anyone else to do it!

So what kind of year has it been? A good one. A rewarding one. The response to the tone and direction of the magazine has been overwhelmingly positive. The words of encouragement and affirmation for the balance we are pursuing have been tremendously rewarding. We have also initiated some changes in the appearance of the magazine to make it more physically attractive and those changes, as well, have been received very positively. Subscriptions are on the rise once again and the future looks promising. God has been good to us the past year and I have not regretted for a moment my acceptance of the editorial role.

Thanks to everyone who has helped to make this past year a rewarding experience. Our prayer is that the pages of *Carolina Christian* will be used by God to bridge the widening gap between churches in the Carolinas and to provide biblical, edifying material that will both challenge and strengthen our readers.

And thanks to the Board of Directors for doubling my salary!

Guest Editorial:

The Lord's Supper

JOHNNY R. MELTON

The old axiom is "Form follows function." However, because something is axiomatic, doesn't make it automatic. It is possible for the relationship of form and function to getout of balance. That possibility became a reality in the Corinthian church and it can be a reality in our churches.

The Corinthians profaned the Lord's Supper by frustrating its function. The many individual members were not being constituted into one unified body of believers (see I Corinthians 10:17). In practice, the body of Christ was divided because the rich were eating and drinking their own suppers without waiting for the poor to arrive. The problem was not just gluttony, even though that certainly cannot be excused. The problem at Corinth was that each member was looking to himself and then eating to satisfy himself. The idea of gluttony or drunkenness is not really under consideration. The phrase "another becomes drunk" contrasts in the text with "one goes hungry" (11:21). That is, one member of the body satisfies himself, satiates his hunger, while another remains hungry. One meets (or actually, exceeds) his own needs, all the while demonstrating a lack of concern for his brother or sister's needs. Eating in this manner, according to Paul, is to eat one's "own supper" and not the Lord's Supper. This kind of individuality destroys community, and Paul issues this stern warning: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord" (11:27).

INDIVIDUALITY VS. COMMUNITY

Paul urges self-examination, not as a focus on oneself as an individual, as an opportunity to expunge attitudes from one's heart that inveigh against community. The Lord's Supper constitutes the individual members into the one body of Christ. Howard Winters, in his Commentary on I Corinthians, explains, "The reason they are one body is because they share in the one loaf—that is, they participate in the meaning and purpose of the death of Christ, of which the communion is a memorial." Because the many members become one body by sharing in the one loaf, Paul declares "all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves" (I Cor. 11:29). In "discerning the body" one gives appropriate attention to the spiritual body of Christ: the church.

Paul articulated in v. 22 his contempt for eating the Supper without discerning the body—which results when the form of the Lord's Supper is not taken seriously. In v. 30 he explains the consequences of such inappropriate action: "For this reason (i.e., failing to discern the body, JRM) many of you are weak and ill, and some have died" (v. 30). Paul interprets these illnesses and deaths as God's punishment for the disorders within the church. The purpose of this "judgment" against the Corinthians for failure to "discern the body" comprises an example of the Lord's discipline in order for them to avoid condemnation along with the world (v. 32).

The exhortation, "So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another" (v. 33), is not a secondary thought. It actually stands at the heart of Paul's understanding of how the Lord's Supper is to be observed. The phrase

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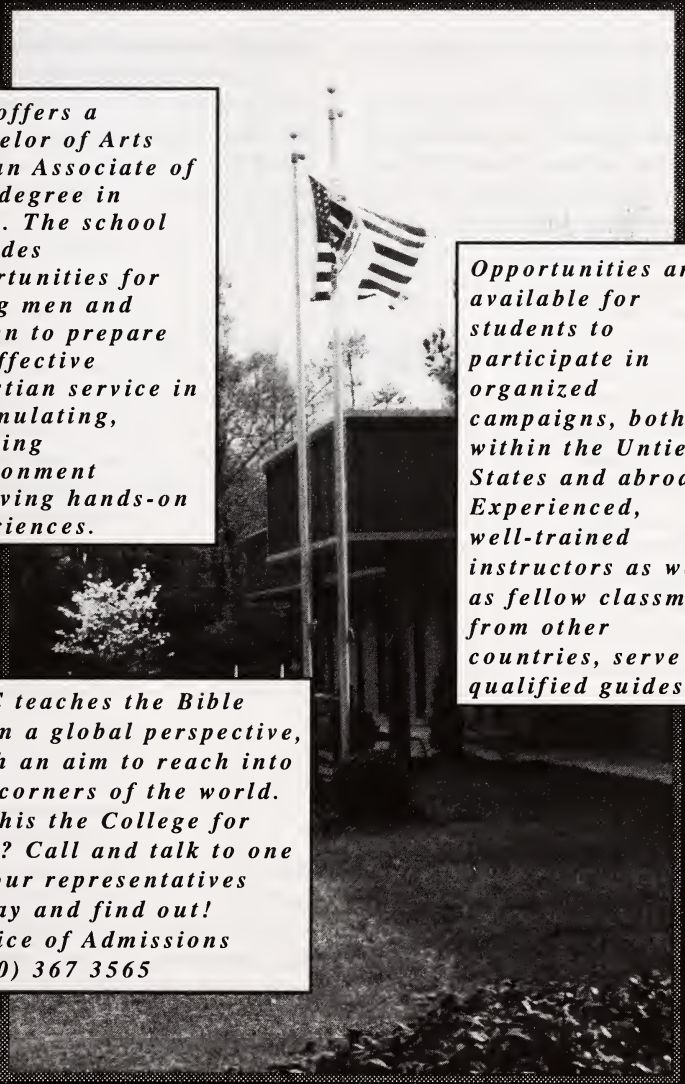

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"when you come together" is pregnant with meaning.

The great mystery of the Gospel is that God reconciles aliens (individuals alienated from God and from their fellows) in Christ on the cross (see Eph. 2 and 3). A corollary of the doctrine of reconciliation is that those reconciled to God by union with Christ are united to each other. Edward J. Kilmartin, in his book, *The Eucharist in the Primitive Church* explains, "The unity that exists in Christ qualitatively through baptism (I Cor. 12:13) is to be quantitatively realized in the Lord's Supper." And C. K. Barrett understands this unity to be an expression of Christian love: "The one loaf broken at the Supper represented the reality of the one body of Christ; all who partook of it were united to one another because they were united to Christ. This unity of the Christian body could be adequately expressedonly in love, and love for one's brother...involved respect for his conscientious scruples (cf. vss. 28f and 8:7,10ff)."

> "In I Corinthians 11:17-34 Paul shows the Lord's Supper to be a significant part of the Corinthians' coming 'together as a church' (v. 18)."

COMMUNAL MEAL

The Lord's Supper is to be eaten in community. Its appropriate form is a communal—as opposed to an individual—meal. "Wait for one another" warns against individualism and isolationism, which frustrate the function the Lord intends the worship experience to accomplish.

As a practical matter Paul suggests, "If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation" (v. 34). This saying does not teach eating in the assembly to be improper. Proper eating in the assembly is precisely what Paul is discussing. Neither does Paul intend to say that only the bread and the cup of the Lord's Supper are to be eaten in the assembly with all other meals eaten at home.

Paul addresses only those abusing the Lord's Supper: they refuse to wait on their brethren, and they satisfy their own hunger while letting their brethren go hungry. He instructs them as follows: "If you are hungry [so much so that you cannot wait on your brethren to arrive in order that all may eat together], eat at home [some food that will satisfy your craving hunger], so that when you come together [you can wait however long it takes for all of your brethren to arrive so that you may truly share the Lord's Supper, and] it will not be for your condemnation [which it will be if you turn the Lord's Supper into your 'own supper']" (v. 34).

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

In I Corinthians 11:17–34 Paul shows the Lord's Supper to be a significant part of the Corinthians' coming "together as a church" (v. 18). Their failure to observe the Lord's Supper appropriately results in a dysfunctional assembly. They are coming together "not for the better but for the worse" (v. 17), and the form of their Lord's Supper renders it not the Lord's Supper at all, but their "own supper," which ultimately shows "contempt for the church of God" (v. 22).

Paul appeals to the Lord's Supper tradition, the one he shared with the Corinthians when he established the church, in order to correct the abuses into which they have fallen. Paul's reason for reciting the tradition is not to correct a misunderstanding of the meaning of the Lord's Supper. If that were the case, then he would explain the meaning of the tradition. Instead, Paul uses the fact that the Corinthians understand the tradition to underscore their failure to observe the Lord's Supper appropriately.

THE ANTIDOTE

The antidote for the ailing Lord's Supper observance in Corinth entails two actions. First, Paul commands the Corinthians to "Examine yourselves" (v. 28) in order to discern the body (v. 29). That is, examine yourselves to make sure that you are not focusing on yourselves as individuals (eating your own supper), but discerning the body (the many individuals formed into one spiritual body as a result of breaking and sharing one loaf of bread, cf. 1 Cor. 10:17). The second component of the antidote is for them to "wait for one another." That this exhortation comes in conjunction with the phrase "when you come together" is significant. This is the major component of Paul's instruction for correcting the problem with the Lord's Supper. When the Corinthians come together "as a church" (v. 18), they are coming together "to eat" (v. 33). The problem with the "divisions among" them (v. 18) can be overcome if they will "wait for one another" (v. 33). Literally waiting for everyone to arrive before eating the Lord's Supper eliminates the practical divisions created when the early arrivals eat more than they need and failto leave anything for the late arrivals.

FOUR FUNCTIONS

In reciting the tradition, Paul reminds the Corinthians of what they already know regarding the Lord's Supper. Four aspects of the Lord's Supper stand out in this recitation. First, the Lord gave thanks for the bread and the cup. The Lord's Supper is a Eucharist—an opportunity for Christians to give thanks to God for the gift of his Son. "This is my body that is for you" suggests a gift "for" Christians.

Second, "Do this in remembrance of me"—a phrase repeated with the bread and the cup only in Paul's account of the tradition—presents the Lord's Supper as a memorial. However, the Lord's Supper is not a mere memorial to, or a reminder of, an event in the distant past. The Lord's Supper brings the past into the present. It serves as a re-present-ation of the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross. Just as in the Passover Jews identify with the Exodus and are joined in community solidarity with fellow Jews in the past and the present, so likewise, in the Lord's Supper Christians identify with the disciples who witnessed the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and join in community solidarity with one another.

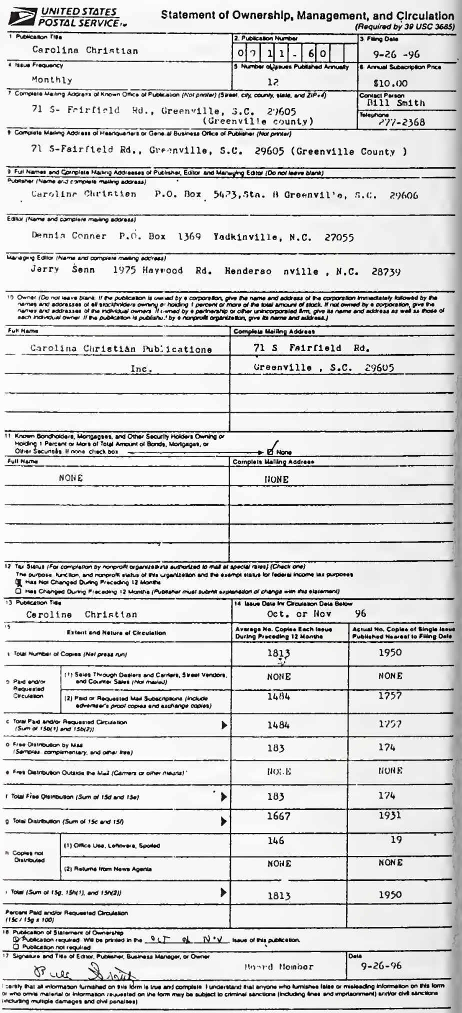
Third, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." The Lord's Supper is testimony to the new covenant. The covenantal nature of the Lord's Supper is important. Not only is the covenant (God's promise or agreement that He initiates) sealed with Jesus' blood, but that blood ratifies the covenant (i.e., Christians enter into the covenant and affirm their acceptance of its terms) in a covenantal meal of bread and cup. This covenantal meal is also a communion.

Four, the Lord's Supper is a means of proclaiming the gospel. In eating the bread and drinking the cup, Christians "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." This proclamation entails more than just eating and drinking, because Christians do not observe the Lord's Supper silently. In instituting the Lord's Supper, Jesus spoke. He prayed and he explained. Rightly observing the Lord's Supper today entails prayers of thanksgiving and words of explanation. In so doing, the benefits of the Lord's death are proclaimed, or preached, "until he comes."

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this special issue of Carolina Christian is to consider these four functions of the Lord's Supper and to suggest forms that might be used so that our celebration of the Lord's Supper might accomplish what God intended. I am grateful to Dennis Conner for the invitation to edit this special issue of the magazine. I pray that this study will result in more meaningful experiences around the Lord's Table for all who read it.

Johnny R. Melton preaches for the Old Aberdeen Road church in West Point, MS. He served on the Board of Directors of Carolina Christian Publications from 1978 to 1995. He served as editor from June 1993 to August 1995.



UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE™

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation
(Required by 39 USC 3685)

1. Publication Title Carolina Christian	2. Publication Number 0 7 1 1 - 6 0	3. Filing Date 9-26 -96
4. Issue Frequency Monthly	5. Number of Issues Published Annually 12	6. Annual Subscription Price $10.00
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication *(Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4)* 71 S- Frirficld Rd., Greenville, S.C. 29605 (Greenville county)		Contact Person Bill Smith Telephone 277-2368

8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher *(Not printer)*
71 S-Fairfield Rd., Greenville, S.C. 29605 (Greenville County)

9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor and Managing Editor *(Do not leave blank)*

Publisher *(Name and complete mailing address)*
Caroline Christien P.O. Box 5423,Sta. B Greenvil'e, S.C. 29606

Editor *(Name and complete mailing address)*
Dennis Conner P.O. Box 1369 Yadkinville, N.C. 27055

Managing Editor *(Name and complete mailing address)*
Jerry Senn 1975 Haywood Rd. Henderso nville , N.C. 28739

10. Owner *(Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)*

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address
Carolina Christian Publicatione	71 S Fairfield Rd.
Inc.	Greenville , S.C. 29605

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box → ☑ None

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address
NONE	NONE

12. Tax Status *(For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates) (Check one)*
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes
☒ Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
☐ Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months *(Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)*

13. Publication Title	14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below	
Caroline Christian	Oct. or Nov 96	
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies *(Net press run)*	1813	1950
b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation (1) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, and Counter Sales *(Not mailed)*	NONE	NONE
(2) Paid or Requested Mail Subscriptions *(Include advertiser's proof copies and exchange copies)*	1484	1757
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation *(Sum of 15b(1) and 15b(2))* ▶	1484	1757
d. Free Distribution by Mail *(Samples, complimentary, and other free)*	183	174
e. Free Distribution Outside the Mail *(Carriers or other means)*	NONE	NONE
f. Total Free Distribution *(Sum of 15d and 15e)* ▶	183	174
g. Total Distribution *(Sum of 15c and 15f)* ▶	1667	1931
h. Copies not Distributed (1) Office Use, Leftovers, Spoiled	146	19
(2) Returns from News Agents	NONE	NONE
i. Total *(Sum of 15g, 15h(1), and 15h(2))* ▶	1813	1950
Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation *(15c / 15g x 100)*		

16. Publication of Statement of Ownership
☑ Publication required. Will be printed in the Oct or Nov issue of this publication.
☐ Publication not required

17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner		Date
	Board Member	9-26-96

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I Corinthians 10:1-4: The Presumption of Immunity

Tim Sensing

An unusual text indeed. Paul's allusions and quotation from the Old Testament are striking and peculiar. What is Paul alluding to? What is the Red Sea's relationship with baptism? Are there allusions to the Lord's Supper or something more generic? How does this text contribute to Paul's ongoing discussion about idolatry and corporate worship?

> "Somehow the Corinthians felt immune to discipline due to their participation in the Christian community."

Paul thinks of these Gentile converts in Corinth as Israel and the story of the wilderness experience is their story too. He wanted them to remember Israel. "All" were in community (5 times). They participated in God's blessings. "All" of them were under the cloudand passed through the sea. "All" of them were baptized into Moses and ate the same spiritual food and drink. Even though they experienced God's blessing, "most" of them also experienced God's discipline. "Some" were punished (4 times). Receiving God's blessing did not give them special license to do whatever.

Somehow the Corinthians felt immune to discipline due to their participation in the Christian community. References to baptism and eating and drinking remind many of Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper. Others (e.g., Howard Winters, *I Corinthians*) generalize these references. Nevertheless, the Corinthians felt they were a special case because of God's blessing.

Throughout 8:1-11:1 Paul addresses the Corinthian practice of eating sacrificial food at pagan temples. This responds to a previous letter (8:1). Paul has already argued that this practice could be a "stumbling-block" to the weak (8:1-13) and that, even with the freedom of apostolic rights, he surrenders his rights to protect others (9:1-27). In 10:14-11:1 he gives the theological reason for the prohibition and lays down the law concerning market-place food. It is in 10:1-14 that he uses the analogy of Israel as an example of how participation in divinely ordained traditions will not save them from punishment for idolatry.

Israel did not heed the warning and many did not attain the "prize" (9:24-27).

Thought Questions

The absolute prohibition of contact with idols in this section seems to contradict his leniency in 8:1-13 and 10:23-31 where eating and drinking are not serious matters. Is Paul trying to have it both ways? Can we eat idol meat and reject idol worship? Can we live in, and use the products of, the secular world without falling prey to society as an idol? Where is the distinction? Is sexual immorality associated with idolatry today? If not, what seems to go hand in hand with idolatry for us? What were the Corinthians doing? Are the references to idolatry, sexual immorality, testing, and grumbling actual sins in the Corinthian fellowship?

Old Testament Background

The only quote Paul uses from the Old Testament is in verse 7: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." Sound familiar? Sounds like the abuses at the Lord's Table found later in the context of chapter 10 and 11. 10:1-14 must be seen with 10:15-22 which also deals with idolatry and food sacrificed to idols. The tie to sexual immorality is plain. Even the grumbling against Moses could easily refer to the Corinthians grumbling against Paul. I believe Paul has selected his examples from the Old Testament specifically because they condemn what the Corinthians were practicing as a Christian community and around the Lord's Table.

A Response to Grace

The Exodus of Israel was an act of grace. The Exodus typology teaches that grace has priority with God. But how does one respond to God's grace? Israel's deliverance began with their "baptism into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Their deliverance continued as they gathered at God's supper table every day to eat "the same spiritual food and [drink] the same spiritual drink." Paul affirms their deliverance was a participation with Christ "for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ." In spite of their deliverance, Israel fell into idolatry.

The Corinthians were somehow justifying what occurred at baptism and the Lord's Supper in order to declare their freedom to behave the way their pagan neighbors behaved. Paul declares to them: Do you not know that when you were baptized that you all participated with Christ in his death (10:2; 12:13)?

Do you not know that when you gather at Table that you all participate in the cup of thanksgiving and body of Christ (10:3-4; 16-17)? Just because God has granted grace, beware, some of you are in danger (10:12). No one should ever entertain the notion that just because God has been gracious to me, just because I was immersed into Christ, just because I gather at the Table every Lord's Day, and a dozen other frequently named externals, that somehow I am exempt from Christian behavior. You cannot participate in either baptism nor the Lord's Supper in a way that excludes ethics.

At the hinge-point of the ages, where the ages meet, these Old Testament stories serve as "typikos" (10:11). Their example brings to remembrance our own baptism and our frequent visits to the Table.

Are we participating with Christ or another?

Tim Sensing preaches for the church in Lexington, SC. Contact him at 649 Barr Road, Lexington, SC 29072.

Communion:
Proclaiming the Lords Death

Ron Newberry

In his letter to the Corinthian church, Paul wrote that the bread in communion is the body of Christ and that the cup is the blood of Jesus. He concludes by noting, "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:24–26 NIV).

> "The focus of worship, indeed of life itself, should be on the death of Jesus."

When we read this text what are we to make of Paul's words? Are we to suppose that the eating and drinking are, per se, the proclamation of the death of Jesus? Perhaps we should assume that there is to be a verbal proclamation of the meaning of the death of Jesus at the time of communion. Or is there another possibility?

The New Testament usage of the word translated "proclaim" in 1 Corinthians 11:26 is quite varied. It is translated preach in the majority of instances (Acts 4:2; 13:5, 38; 15:36; 17:3, 13; 1 Cor. 9:14; Phil. 1:16, 18; Col. 1:28). It is translated telling (Acts 16:17), teach (Acts 16:21), spoken (Rom. 1:8) and declare (Acts 17:23; 1 Cor. 2:1). In every text where this word occurs, there is a positive, upbeat, excited spirit involved. This word proclaim has to do with good news, as well it should.

The focus of worship, indeed of life itself, should be on the death of Jesus. That's not religious rhetoric; that's truth. When Paul began this letter to the Corinthians, he wrote in 1:23 that he preached Christ crucified. That language was a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks. Yet, he continues in verse 24, this crucifixion is the power of God in action.

Whatever else Paul may have included in his message to the Corinthians and others, he assured them in 1 Corinthians 2:2 that he resolved to know nothing while he was with them except Christ and him crucified. In 15:1–4 he added that when he preached the "gospel" it included, at the heart, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. There is no doubt that when, through communion, we proclaim the Lord's death, we are preaching, teaching, telling, declaring, speaking the good news of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

The question remains, "How do we do that during communion?" Does the partaking of the bread and cup speak the good news or are we to include some verbal prelude to the physical act?

Granted, Paul does not expound on that question. However, there is a reasonable answer that should be considered. Remember that when the Lord himself took the Passover meal and transformed it into the Lord's supper, it was at a time when the Jews were commissioned toexplain its meaning, to remember and clarify its purpose (cf. Exod. 12:25ff). Can we not conclude that there should be some explanation, teaching, clarification of the meaning of the Lord's supper? That does not preclude the fact that the act of eating the bread and drinking the cup "speak" in their own way. Yet, to allow that to stand alone without comment seems to this writer to miss a prime opportunity to proclaim the central event of Christianity, the pivotal point of history, the very heart of the gospel: namely, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

The questions asked at the beginning of this article had to do with whether the act of communion was the proclamation of the death of Jesus or should there be a verbal message to accompany the silent one? I conclude that there should be both a verbal reminder of what this part of worship means as well as allowing the solemnity of the moment of actual communion to speak to our solidarity and unity with Christ and with one another. This would not only provide variety which would deflect any criticism that weekly communion can become common place and lose its meaning, it would also provide a myriad of significant opportunities to explain and explore the various facets of the Lord's supper as it relates to Christians and salvation through the death of Jesus.

The following is a suggested approach to making the observance of the Lord's supper more meaningful.

The presider at the table could read texts like I Corinthians 11:23–26 or one of the texts in the Gospels dealing with the institution of the Lord's supper. It would be good to briefly tie the Lord's supper to the Passover feast and explain how the death angel has passed over us because we are covered by the blood of Jesus. During the communion, other Scriptures could be read and/or songs sung such as, "There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit," "By Christ Redeemed," "Nailed to the Cross," or any other appropriate contemporary songs dealing with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and the unity of the body through his death. In so doing, we too will proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Ron Newberry, a member of the Board of Directors of Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., preaches for the Friendly Avenue church in Greensboro, NC. Contact him at 5101 W. Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410.

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In Remembrance of Me

PAUL JARRETT

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME. These words of our Lord which are recorded in Paul's account* of the instituting of the Lord's Supper are found on many communion tables. The text in which they appear (I Cor. 11:23–25) may very well be the most frequently read text when the Lord's Supper is observed. Without doubt, that the Lord's Supper is to be observed in His memory is the most commonly held view of our purpose for gathering around His table.

This issue of *Carolina Christian* is designed to enable us to see that the Lord's Supper can serve a variety of purposes in our assembly. While I do not question that the remembrance prompted by the Lord's Supper is an extremely important purpose, I do question whether the scope of our remembrance of Him should be as narrow as we sometimes try to make it. I raise this question, not to criticize what we are remembering, but to encourage us to a fuller, deeper, richer remembrance of our Lord and Savior.

As a general rule, when reference is made to remembrance, something along this line may be said: "Let us remember Jesus as He hung, dying, on the cross for our sins." I can recall how as a young Christian I would struggle to hold that singular image of Jesus in my thoughts as the Lord'sSupper was observed. Often I felt guilty because over the course of the Supper, I would let that visual picture of Him hanging on the cross slip from my mind.

I am thankful to say that over the years I have come to realize that communing in remembrance of Him is more than just envisioning Jesus hanging on the cross. That single image is no more the extent of what it means to remember Christ than it would be to remember a departed loved one by focusing only on how they looked on their death bed, or in their casket. Our remembrance of Jesus should involve the full extent of His grace which climaxed in His death on the cross. This remembrance of Him is best described in the words of my favorite song. It is not a familiar song to many and I have never heard it sung as a communion song. However, it is one I would recommend that you consider learning and using for the purpose. The title of the song is "Sweeter As The Years Go By" and its message is as follows:

"Of Jesus love that sought me,
When I was lost in sin;
Of wondrous grace that brought me
back to His fold again;
Of heights and depths of mercy,
far deeper than the sea,
And higher than the heavens,
My theme shall ever be.
(Chorus)
Sweeter as the years go by,
Sweeter as the years go by;
Richer, fuller, deeper,
Jesus' love is sweeter
Sweeter as the years go by
He trod in old Judea
Life's pathway long ago;
The people thronged about Him,
His saving grace to know.
He healed the broken hearted,
And caused the blind to see;
And still His great heart yearneth,
In love for even me.
'Twas wondrous love which led Him
For us to suffer loss—

To bear without a murmur
The anguish of the cross.
With saints redeemed in glory,
Let us our voices raise,
Till heaven and earth re-echo
With our Redeemer's praise.

As this song suggest, all of Jesus' life was an expression of God's grace towards man. To remember Him is to reflect upon all that He did and taught. This does not detract from our remembering His death on the cross. Rather, by remembering the whole of His life and teaching we give greater meaning to His sacrifice. This is especially true if we realize that the sacrifice He came to offer the Father was "To do [His] will" (Heb. 10:5–9).

I came to more fully appreciate what it means to remember Him when I thought about what kind of thoughts would have gone through the mind of those who knew Him in the flesh as they communed around His table. Their memories of Christ would have been rich! Peter, for example, would have, no doubt, thought about the lessons he had learned first-hand about human weakness and God's forgiveness. James and John's thoughts would have turned on more than one occasion to the lesson learned about the true greatness to be found in humble service. The apostle Paul's thoughts, no doubt, would have centered on the insufficiency of his own works of righteousness and the wonder of God's indescribable grace.

I might suggest here that our times around the Lord's Table might be enhanced if the one presiding would take a moment to share with us some lesson about God's grace to be learned by considering the thoughts of those who knew Him in the flesh. While these thoughts all ultimately would flow to the cross, a freshness in our remembrance of Him may be found by tracing these thoughts from their source. In addition to those I've already named, we could enhance our own appreciation of Christ by placing ourselves in the place of Simon of Cyrene who bore His cross; or Cornelius, the first Gentile to hear that the good news was for Gentiles as well as Jews; or Mary of Magdalene who was the first to discover the empty tomb.

While we can benefit from the memories others have of Christ, we all need to take time to reflect on our personal memories of Him as we commune. We may recall the time of our rebirth. Or, we may reflect on some of the blessings we have received as a result of His grace. Or, we may evenbe challenged to consider how our problems (many of which are self-inflicted) pale in comparison with what the innocent Savior endured on the cross for our salvation.

When we truly remember Him as we commune we should be moved to more fervent worship. We should be moved to a greater hatred of sin and more zeal to live the holy life to which we have been called in Christ Jesus. We should be more forgiving and more compassionate towards our fellow Christians. Our lives should be made better in every way as we remember Him — the life He lived and the death He died.

* *Luke's gospel also makes reference to the concept of remembrance in respect to the loaf.*

Contact Paul E. Jarrett at 1824 Tamworth Dr.,
Charlotte, NC 28210.

Thanksgiving and the Lord's Supper

Bailey Forrest

In November many Americans will be celebrating Thanksgiving Day. We will fellowship over a meal with loved ones in commemoration of the way God delivered the pilgrim Europeans who settled on this continent in the beginning of the formation of this nation. The story will be told in our schools of how those first settlers thanked God for what He had given them. The Lord's Supper has a similar *thematic* background. The theme of thanksgiving runs strong throughout the history of its staging.

> *"The Passover Meal is filled with the festive atmosphere of thanksgiving for the Lord's providence of life. Jesus' instructions in the institution of the Supper are undergirded by centuries of this festive remembrance."*

The floor, backdrop and props for the state is the celebration of the Passover. The Passover meal was annually celebrated by God's people in praise to Him for His deliverance from the death angel and the Egyptian slavery (Ex. 12:14). The Jews were to remind their children that this was in remembrance of how the Lord passed over their homes and spared their first born from death (Ex. 12:27). In addition, they were to eat the meal girded, as if ready to leave, to acknowledge their quick departure from Egypt's slavery at God's hand (Ex. 12:11). In this way they were to remember the Passover meaningfully, not just ritualistically, as the relived the Lord's deliverance of their lives.

Jesus instituted the Supper on the stage of the Passover while with His disciples (Lk. 22:7). In the midst of this celebration of the deliverance of God, Jesus instituted the church's commemoration of God's deliverance from the slavery and death of sin through Him (Matt. 26:28; Rom. 8:1-2). The Passover Meal is filled with the festive atmosphere of thanksgiving for the Lord's providence of life. Jesus' instructions in the institution of the Supper are undergirded by centuries of this festive remembrance.

By the end of the first century Christians called the Supper the "Eucharist," which is Greek for "thanksgiving." This designation is often cited by scholars as a likely development from the description of the "cup of blessing," which was a blessing given to the last cup of wine drunk in Jewish practice of the Passover Feast. In Jewish tradition, a cup of wine was offered at the end of the meal by the head of the company. In the offering, he would word phrases of thanksgiving with the cup in hand before it's consumption was offered to the attending party. Luke seems to make reference to this cup in his description of the Lord's Supper in Luke 22:20. Paul, who refers to the cup of the Lord's Supper in I Corinthians 10:16 as the "cup of thanksgiving," also seems to make this reference. Therefore, the historical basis is set for the eventual designation of the Lord's Supper as the "Eucharist" from the very language that is used to describe it.

However, I suspect there is more than just a language background to what comes to be the eventual designation "Eucharist." If indeed the setting for the institution of the supper is a time of thankful remembrance of God's deliverance in the Passover, could this same theme not possibly be prominent in the celebration that the early disciples performed as they followed the new covenant practice? After all, the Supper does commemorate God's deliverance from slavery and death to a life dependant on Him for sustenance and to a journey with future hope of the promised land of eternal life. Perhaps, then, not only did a language background provide a basis for the description of the Supper as the "thanksgiving," but also a spirit of participating with deep gratitude in the new covenant practice pervaded the Suppers of the early Christians. In fact, it could be that this very spirit is what naturally led them to make reference to the Supper as "the thanksgiving" as an abbreviation of the words used during its observance.

We can easily imagine that the first Christians, described as full of joy over their salvation in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:42-47), devoted themselves to the breaking of bread with hearts full of gladness. They had been forgiven from sin and death! When they should have expected sure punishment for putting the son of God to death, they are instead offered God's forgiveness. Amazing! How deeply grateful they must have felt. The theme of thanksgiving pervading the Passover celebration has now been realized by the disciples of the new covenant through the offering of ***the*** Passover Lamb. Believers in this salvation rejoice with inexpressible joy, receiving as the outcome of their faith the salvation of their souls (I Pet. 1:8-9).

You might ask yourself, "How can I celebrate about the death of my Lord Jesus? After all, He suffered for me." Yet, it is in the very significance of this realization that joy is found alongside sorrow. We know that perishable and defiled offerings cannot atone for our sins (I Pet. 1:4). We know that the blood of bulls and goats cannot cleanse our consciences of our wrongdoing (Heb. 10:1-4). Because of their insufficiencies, such things do not satisfy the requirement for atonement. They leave us forlorn in our lostness. Only the sacrifice of the perfect Son of God is sufficient. Praise God that He provided such a real salvation. It's very sufficiency is found in its intense sorrow. Therefore we can rejoice in the suffering of Christ.

We can do nothing, then, but praise the Lord for the deliverance that He gave us from death through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, the true Passover Lamb. May we remember His deliverance each time we participate in the Lord's Supper.

A lack of such sincere, thankful remembrance is in fact the indictment that Paul levelled against the Corinthians.

They were not remembering the "cup of thanksgiving" of which they drank (1 Cor. 10:16, 21). How could they be taking the cup with a sincere giving of thanks for their deliverance (see 1 Cor. 10:1-13) if they were also eating at the table of demons? To be at the table of demons (10:21) was to fail to sincerely recognize that God is the one and only provider of life (10:2-4). God was not and is not pleased with such an attitude. Followers of God rely on Him for salvation and do not turn to the empty pursuits of the world for life and providence.

Therefore, as we celebrate the Lord's Supper with sincere thanksgiving for His deliverance, we also remind ourselves that we have not turned to the world's ways to give us life. Sincere participation in the Lord's Supper comes from a commitment to follow Him. We cannot be at the table of the world on Saturday night, enjoying its fancies, and at the table of the Lord on Sunday morning fully enjoying its deliverance. To try to do so would be to make a sham of our thanksgiving at the Lord's table.

Unfortunately, many in America celebrate Thanksgiving Day with just exactly that kind of superficiality. They will give little heartfelt consideration to thank God for His deliverance of the pilgrims and the blessings that we enjoy as a consequence. May such thanklessness not be found in the celebration of the Lord's Supper among the children of God.

Bailey Forrest serves the Brooks Ave. church of Christ in Raleigh, NC, as campus minister. He may be contacted at 700 Brooks Ave., Raleigh, NC 27607.

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The Lord's Supper and Fellowship

PHIL STAPP

The zebra is one of nature's great comical contradictions. In form and gait they convey the majesty of the horse. In appearance they invoke images of a circus. There is much we can learn, however, from the zebra about fellowship and the Lord's supper.

A zebra alone is a zebra in trouble, easily seen by hungry predators. In a crowd, the stripes provide a disguise. As zebras converge together, there is an ever-changing array of lines and spaces that merge and mix to obscure the outline of their bodies. A zebra's stripes are also his identification. Each zebra's markings are as unique as a set of fingerprints. Their stripes identify who is who and who belongs to whom. This recognition is important because their survival depends on the protection they gain from belonging to a group.

Zebras graze and migrate in large herds, but each herd consists of separate and distinct groups. Each group is composed of individuals that protect and care for each other. They are linked to each other and to their stallion by a strong affection for one another. To the zebra, the family unit is all-important. If a member wanders away from the group, panic ensues until it is found. The stallion and mares race through the herd searching for the pattern of stripes that distinguishes their stray from all of the other zebras. If an individual is wounded or ill, it is not shunned or deserted on the plains. The family waits for it, slowing its pace to keep the straggler safe within the fold until it recovers from its wounds.

As they graze, zebras take turns scanning the horizon searching for predators. When one is sighted, a loud bark and snort signal the alarm. Families merge, trotting into semicircles to face the enemy. If an attack is launched, the mares and foals bolt for safety while the stallion remains behind. He charges the enemy, placing himself between it and his family. Often, he succeeds in aborting the attack. But even if his efforts fail, all is not lost. If the retreating zebras hear a cry for help, they will return. In a whirlwind of stripes and dust, they sweep between the predator and its prey, encircle their loved one, and gallop together to safety.

So what do Zebras have to do with the Lord's supper? A lot, because they teach us about fellowship, and fellowship is at the heart of the Lord's supper. To help us see this important connection, let's take a quick tour through I Corinthians.

"I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought (1:10)... You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? (3:3)... Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple (3:16-17)... For Christ our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but the bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth (4:7-8)... Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf (10:16-17)... The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave orfree—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink (12:12-13)... But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it (12:24-27)... Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of

Brotherhood News

MIKE MOBLEY

LAURINBURG, NC... In July of 1995 a few Christian families began meeting in the home of one of those families with great hopes that a new and greatly needed church in Laurinburg would grow and thrive. With recent converts and the addition of others who have moved into the area, the congregation has grown to a membership of 32. Presently they are leasing a small commercial building, but they have the opportunity before them to purchase their own property. The present least consumes 60% of the church's budget, making it difficult to afford the new property. Any individuals or churches interested in helping the church take healthy and long lasting root in this area should contact the brethren at P.O. Box 98, Laurinburg, NC 28353 or call (910) 276-1379 and (910) 582-4076.

LUBBOCK, TX... The Sunset International Bible Institute announces the appointment of *Bobby Hise* as coordinator of its youth ministry training program. Those interested in enrolling in this program should contact him at the Institute at 3723 34th St., Lubbock, TX 79410.

COSTAL NORTH CAROLINA... The October issue of *Christian Chronicle* reports that "efficiency and innovation mark relief efforts by brotherhood disasterministries and by North Carolina congregations" in the wake of the destruction left by Hurricane Fran. Almost immediately following the hurricane, relief organizations by members of the church were in the coastal area helping local congregations with relief efforts in the hardest hit areas. They arrived with generators, chain saws, fresh water, and family boxes of food. To those still interested in helping or wanting more information, contact *Jim Shaw* at the PineValley church of Christ at (910) 791-2255 or *Ron Edwards* at the Roosevelt Dr. church of Christ at (910) 346-6069.

CLEMMONS, NC...A fund–raising dinner for the work of Eastern European Missions on October 8 resulted in donations and pledges amounting to more than $15,000. The dinner was hosted by the South Fork Church of Christ in Winston-Salem. EEM is in the process of writing and publishing a Bible curriculum that will be used in the public schools in a region of Russia.

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wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails" (13:4-8).

These passages give us the context in which to understand Paul's statement in 11:27-29:

"Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgement on himself."

Paul is not referring just to the physical body of Jesus, but also to His body as it exists today in His church. We cannot participate in the body and blood of Jesus in the Lord's supper if we are not living and working together as the body of Christ. A proper application of Matthew 5:23-24 is: "If you are participating in the Lord's supper and remember that your brother has something against you, leave the Lord's supper. First, go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and participate in the body and blood of Christ."

When we come together to remember Jesus, let us do so with the same love and grace that He has given us. It is an offense to God when people participate in the Lord's supper together yet are bickering and quarreling with each other or are unconcerned about each other. The Lord's supper is a weekly reminder of God's love that should draw us closer together in Christ. We are to be like the zebras, loving, caring for and protecting one another.

Yes, zebras can teach us a lot about the Lord's supper. They teach us about fellowship, and fellowship, with Christ and with one another, is at the heart of the Lord's supper.

Phil Stapp preaches for the Brewer Rd. church in Winston-Salem, NC. He can be contacted at 2010 Brewer Rd., Winston-Salem, NC 27127.

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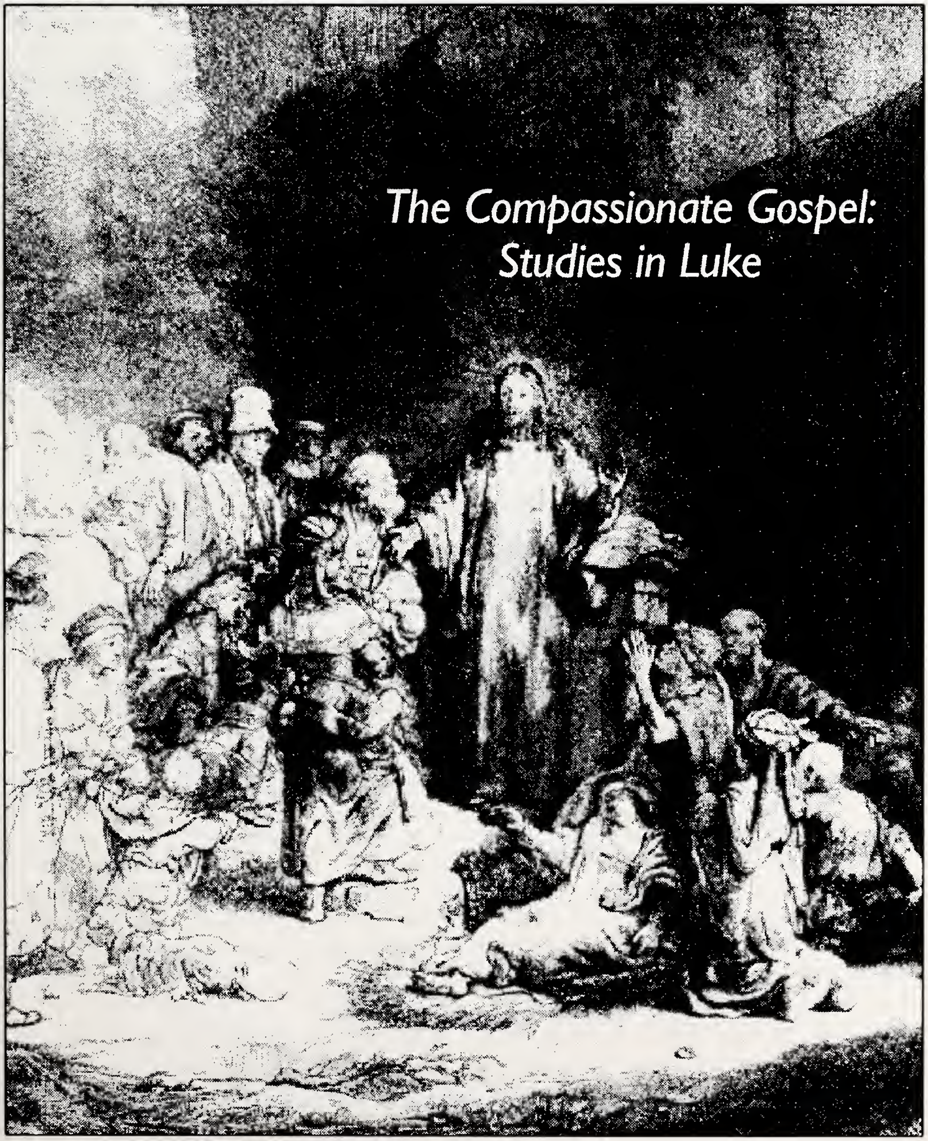

The Compassionate Gospel: Studies in Luke

CAROLINA christian

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN
(ISSN 0008-672X)

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CAROLINA CHRISTIAN (091160) published monthly by Carolina Christian Publications, Inc., at 71 S. Fairfield Rd., Greenville, SC 29605. Subscription price: Individual–$10/year ($18/2 years and $26/3 years); club of five or more–$9 each; quantities of 15 or more in bundles–60¢/copy/month; church mailing list (minimum 15) 75¢/copy/month. Periodicals postage paid at Greenville, SC.

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes
with Form 3579 to:

Carolina Christian
Jerry Senn, Managing Editor
1975 Haywood Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739
Address editorial matter to:
Dennis Conner
PO Box 1369
Yadkinville, NC 27055-1369
Address news items to:
Michael Mobley
301 Reed Creek Rd.
Mooresville, NC 28115

Address commercial advertising inquiries to:
Jacobs List, Inc.
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Address all advertising pertaining to the churches of Christ or its members (including related organizations) to the editor.

All items to be printed in a given month's issue should reach the editor no later than the 10th day of the preceding month.

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A Pattern of Witnessing

DENNIS CONNER

In the gospel of John, another John (the Baptizer) bursts onto the scene, being abruptly introduced to the story. While the other gospels give us glimpses of his appearance, habits and style of preaching, John's gospel gives little or no attention to those matters. What is important to him is the Baptizer's testimony to Jesus. He writes, "John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, 'This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me was preferred before me, for He was before me' " (John 1:15). John the Baptist possessed a clear understanding of his purpose: *he was to be a witness.* In this age of marketing and growing churches, this is an understanding that is at times forgotten.

The people flocked to the wilderness to hear this strange new preacher and to get a drink of the water he offered. He was becoming quite famous, attracting enough attention that even the Sanhedrin had to find out what was going on. They thought that John might be the long–awaited and eagerly anticipated Messiah. A delegation was dispatched to check him out, and when asked by them, "Who are you?" he answered, "I am not the Christ." "Then are you Elijah?" "I am not." They persisted, "Are you the Prophet?" Again, "No." "Well, we must have something to report to our superiors. What do you have to say about yourself?" Borrowing from Isaiah he answered, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness..." He was a voice of witness.

At this point John was at the height of his popularity. His prophetic career was in full swing. Then something happened. The apostle tells us that the day following this interview John saw Jesus approaching. Centering all attention on Jesus, John declared, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (1:30-31). Then the text says, "And John bore witness...I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God" (1:32-34).

The next day John was with two of his disciples and he saw Jesus walking in the distance. Turning to them he announced once more, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" He meant by those words to transfer their allegiance from himself to Jesus; from that point onward they were to behold and follow Christ. It wasn't fame or public adulation that mattered to him. What mattered was that people behold Jesus. Again, John understood well what his own life was to be about: *he was to be a witness to Jesus.*

The two disciples approached Jesus and ended up spending the rest of the day with Him. It was a day that forever changed their lives. After leaving the Lord that day, they immediately sought out others to tell them what they had experienced and discovered. Andrew excitedly announced to Simon, "We have found the Messiah!" He, too, had now become a witness.

By this point in the story a clear pattern is beginning to emerge, a pattern of witnessing. It began with God Himself when He witnessed to John at the baptism of Jesus. John became a witness and devoted his ministry to pointing others to Jesus, the Lamb of God who had the power to take away peoples' sins. Then some of those to whom John witnessed experienced Christ for themselves, and they in turn became witnesses. It is just this way that the circle of faith widens and the kingdom expands.

There is a valuable and fundamental

truth here for the mission and ministry of the church. The apostle had already told his readers that the story he records is his own testimony to that men may come to understand and accept the glory of Christ as the Son and Lamb of God (20:30-31). And with this inclusion of John the Baptist's ministry and his witness to his disciples, the apostle istelling us that if people are to behold the glory of Christ, then someone must tell them. *There must be witnesses.*

That raises an important question for each of us individually and for the church collectively: is the pattern of witnessing being carried out in us? Have we ourselves truly experienced Christ and has the experience so affected us that we feel compelled to tell others? In this lies the key to the growth and influence of the church in our modern world. We may design our ministries, concoct our programs, and plan our events (all of which are fine in their place), but unless we ourselves become witnesses to the glory of Christ there will be few churches that grow and those that do will be winning people to something other than Christ.

There are lots of people out there who are dying of thirst. They need someone to be to them a cup bearing the water that will quench their thirst once and for all. They need someone to bear witness to them of the glory and power of Christ. They need someone to point them to Jesus so that they might experience Him for themselves. They need for you and me to loosen our tongues.

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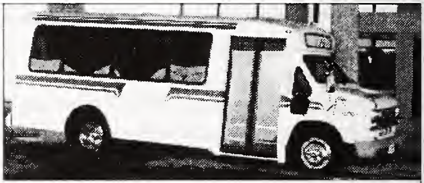
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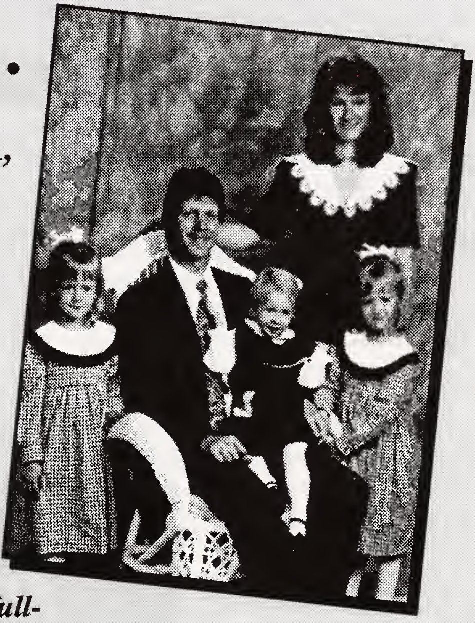

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Associate Editorial:

God's Reminders

JIM MULLICAN

God has always been prone to give us reminders, lest in our daily quest for the things which are less important we forget the things which are truly important.

For instance, the Jewish Sabbath was a reminder that God created the world in six days, rested on the seventh day, and that therefore His people under the old covenant were to do the same. He was so serious about it that those who worked on Saturday were executed, lest people begin to show a lack of respect for God and His law (such as has happened in our society).

The rainbow was chosen to be a reminder of God's promise that He would never again destroy the world with a flood. He never has, and even today when we see a rainbow, we can remember that God always keeps His promises.

> "God has always been prone to give us reminders..."

Yom Kippur—the Jewish Day of Atonement—was a reminder to the Jewish people each year of their own sinfulness. Each year they offered one goat as a sacrifice and then confessed their sins through the high priest, symbolically placing them on the goat before sending it away into the wilderness. All this was a reminder of their guilt and of God's forgiveness in no longer counting their sins against them.

For Christians, the weekly observance of the Lord's supper is a reminder of the death of Jesus on the cross. It is also a reminder of our sins which He took upon Himself, much like the Old Testament scapegoat. It is also a time when we should commit ourselves to not burdening Christ with addition sins by our conduct.

And baptism is a reminder of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. When done as God intended, the penitent sinner closes the door on the previous life of sin, is buried in the water, and is raised to live a new and different life as a Christian and a child of God.

Even the seasons of the year serve to remind us of certain truths. They each remind us of God's promise to Noah in Genesis 8:22, "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease." Certain seasons seem to have a meaning all their own and to remind us of the stages of life. Thus, the autumn season we have now entered, with the leaves changing and the chill in the air, reminds us of old age and the approach of death. Still, it is my favorite season. Perhaps God placed so much beauty in theautumn to remind us that we should not fear old age and death, but instead recognize them as the necessary stage through which we pass on the way to an eternal spring. As the song says, "I am going to a city where the streets with gold are laid, Where the tree of life is blooming, and the roses never fade."

I'm looking forward to it. Aren't you? But until then, I'm looking forward to seeing the splendor God will spread across the mountains and the land every autumn. It will be a reminder of His greatness and His glory, lest we forget.

Guest Editorial:

The Compassionate Gospel
Studies in Luke

Mike Mobley

The "compassionate gospel" fittingly describes Luke's redemption story, the story of God's complete work to save His lost creation. God redeems us from weakness and shame, from loneliness and heartache. He redeems us from wickedness and its ruin. He redeems us from the abuse and neglect of being unwanted unloved. God's great saving act is Jesus. And why did He do it? Because He loves everyone of us! He looked down upon the lost human condition and was moved with compassion.

> *"God's compassion is the redemptive love of Calvary."*

You, me — all of us — are God's most precious treasure because we are His offspring in His image, and when even one of His children runs away, His undying and active love makes Him anxiously seek us out. When even one of His children gets lost, like a wandering sheep, He becomes the loving Shepherd who seeks high and low and risks His own life to save that lost child and then carry him back home to his family on His shoulders. This is compassion, the compassion that redeems us. God's compassion is the redemptive love of Calvary.

Luke was a physician, a caring man who believed the body could be healed with the right touch. He was also a Christian who believed in and experienced the power of Christ's healing touch for the human condition. Only the Savior can bring life out of death and give the lonely a reason to live. Only Jesus can give hope, peace and life to those who are shamed and ruined by the choices they have made. He alone is the impregnable fortress and refuge for our troubled lives. Only Jesus can exalt the humble and fill the hearts of the unwanted with acceptance and love. Jesus Christ is the Master Healer we all need, for He is our only Redeemer! Jesus Christ is the embodiment of the compassionate gospel.

It is our hope that this issue will vividly describe for you the radical way Jesus treated people, no matter who they were. We pray that this issue of *Carolina Christian* will enable us all to see ourselves and everyone else through the eyes of Jesus. We offer this to you that we all can learn to think and behave, to live and to die, with he goodness of God's righteous character and compassionate heart. God does possess the power to redeem and heal what he has saved, and save us He does because of His compassion for us. This is the message of Luke, the compassionate gospel.

Mike Mobley is the Brotherhood News Editor for ***Carolina Christian*** *and teaches at the Jackson Training School in Concord, NC. He can be contacted at 301 Reed Creek Rd., Mooresville, NC 28115.*

Compassion for the Poor

PAUL HALL

James asks, "Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in?" Perhaps every one of us is familiar with this passage in James. Can you relate this to some experience in your own life? Likely each of us is able to remember an occurrence where a person was slighted or looked down upon because that person had less money or less status than someone else. In other words, we have witnessed prejudice toward the poor.

> *"To Jesus it was not physical wealth that mattered, but spiritual wealth."*

Did you ever wonder why God chose to herald the most important event in all of history to a group of poor, unlearned shepherds? When Jesus was born the angels announced to this unlikely bunch, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Lk. 2:10-11, KJV). Why was the announcement made to these shepherds who were poor?

And then, have you ever thought about where Christ was born? If we could have planned the events that took place that night two thousand years ago I am sure we would have had Christ being born under the best and most comfortable circumstances possible, but that isn't the way God did it. Why did He choose such a lowly place with only the animals as witnesses? Why was Christ born in a feed trough instead of a nice warm bed? "You will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Lk. 2:12, KJV). Why was Jesus born into a situation of poverty? Do you suppose it is possible that God knew who would accept His Son as their Lord and Savior? Over the years my observation has been that the more successful men become the more self–sufficient they become, taking credit for their own successes and seeing little need for God. It has also been my observation that those who experience pain, failure and loss in life tend to draw closer to God. Our poverty, physical and spiritual, makes us realize how much need we have for God in our daily lives.

We have all been aware of people who have been great benefactors to the church and have used their wealth to promote the Kingdom. How blessed the church has been to have had such men and women who were able to use their wealth and talent to spread the gospel. However, these are rare and unique individuals. On one occasion in Luke's account two brothers were arguing over their inheritance. Jesus said to them, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Lk. 12:15). Then followed the parable about the rich man and his barns (Lk. 12:16-21).

To Jesus it was not physical wealth that mattered, but spiritual wealth. Men, did you buy yourself something expensive this past week? Ladies, did you buy a new outfit this week? Did you buy some new shoes and a new purse to match? How would you like to have a beautiful purse that matches everything you own and that will never wear out? You can. Jesus said to His disciples, "Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys" (Lk. 12:33). I am not suggesting that it is required that everyone give away everything they own, but this passage teaches us that we do have a responsibility to the poor because Jesus cared about the poor. I remember seeing a marquee on a church in Nashville, Tennessee, when I was a young man. It said: "Happiness adds and multiplies as we divide it with others." There have never been truer words.

While I am sure all will agree that we need to be careful that we do not become unequally yoked with unbelievers, we also need to be careful that we do not exclude some souls from our circlebecause of their lack of money or status in this world. We need to follow the example of Jesus by including and taking care of the poor. We need to make sure that everyone is included and no one is excluded because they don't have money. God can use us all. For those who have money and a multitude of other blessings, such things are no good if not used to the glory of God. Store them up and moths will eat them, rust will cover them and all those things will decay.

God chose the poor and uneducated to hear the announcement of His Son's birth. If we are faithful Christians, maybe we too will be included in their company.

Paul Hall worships with the Kannapolis church of Christ in Kannapolis, NC. He may be contacted at 7388 Hoffner Dr., Harrisburg, NC 28075.

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Joe Cannon, Director; Highland St. Church of Christ
443 South Highland Street, Memphis, TN 38111, (901)458-3335

Compassion for the Lonely

Rob Albright

We understand that Christians are to have the mind of Christ (Phil 2:5). This simply means that our attitude should be like His. We, therefore, should have the desire to help others when they hurt. That desire is called "compassion." Compassion was one of the most noticeable traits of Jesus' character, and it is a character trait that must be developed in the life of the follower of Jesus. Peter writes, "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble" (1 Pet. 3:8). And as God's people we are told, "Clothe yourselves with compassion" (Col. 3:12).

Opportunities abound for us to demonstrate our compassion. One important and often over–looked area of concern is that of compassion for the lonely. To find those who are lonely you do not have to look very far. Many in our world and in our churches are hurting from loneliness. In Luke 7:11-17 Jesus went to a town called Nain and there He witnessed a funeral procession. Luke made it a point to note that the dead person was the "only" son of his mother, and that the woman herself was a widow. In other words, she now had nobody else in this life. She was alone. Touched by the woman's grief, Jesus approached her and said, "Don't cry." He had compassion for her and raised her son to life again! She would not be alone.

Who are the lonely? You might be surprised. As a matter of fact, one does not even have to be alone to be lonely. A person can work with a large number of people and still be lonely. The pew you sit on at church can be filled, and someone on that pew still be lonely. Allow me to suggest some kinds of people who might be lonely and in need of our care.

First, what about those who are in the military, or who are away at college and had to leave family, friends and familiar surroundings? Could we not respond by writing letters, sending care packages? And when they come home during a school break or military leave, let them know how much they have been missed.

Think also about the elderly man or woman in a nursing facility. They have been displaced and need our compassion to remind them that they still matter. We can visit, play a table game, take a walk, and gifts at unexpected times are always appreciated.

Remember, too, the one who is in prison. Not everyone can personally visit, but cards, letters, and church bulletins are ways of letting these lonely persons know that they are not forgotten. And don't forget the family who also struggles during this difficult time.

Think about the young person who is battling a weight problem and feels unwanted. They need to know they are valuable and accepted. Encourage their involvement is social activities and churchministries. Encourage their efforts to improve their physical health. Be a friend. Appreciate them for who they are. Pay attention to positive characteristics.

And then, consider those who grieve for a loved one. Long after the funeral, continue to write encouraging notes. Spend time with them one–on–one. Help with needed repairs around the house. Share your own memories of the loved one, or be there just to provide a listening ear.

You see. We have endless opportunities

to show compassion. The world needs to see us as a caring and compassionate people.

For those who may not be alone, but are battling loneliness, it is important to know that God understands how you feel, and He cares. Consider these suggestions for times of loneliness.

First, ***don't run from God.*** Times of loneliness are times to draw closer to Him. Spend time with the Scriptures. Continue to worship and serve God with others in the church. Try to develop God's perspective of problems that threaten to bring you down (James 1:2-4). Talk to God, and as you do so "cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7). You are important to God.

> "The world needs to see us as a caring and compassionate people."

Second, *don't run from friends*. When we get lonely, we need not only God's help, but also the help of our friends. We cannot overcome the problems of loneliness without the support of others. That is one of the great values of Christian fellowship. We do not have to suffer alone. Jesus, facing death on the cross, took His three closest friends (Peter, James and John) with Him into the garden of Gethsemane as He prayed (Matt. 26:36-39). Even Jesus recognized the value of friends in times of great need.

Finally, *stay busy serving others.* Loneliness tends to focus our attention inward. Try to keep an outward focus. Your cards, letters, cards, and visits help others in their time of need. Being busy in the practice of love will not allow the attitudes that feed loneliness to camp out in your heart.

When the church is acting in compassion, there is no need for anyone to stand alone.

Rob Albright, who preaches for the Thomasville church in Thomasville, NC, can be contacted at 612 Lakeview Dr., Thomasville, NC 27360.

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Compassion for the Morally Corrupt

AMOS ALLEN

Brenda and Abby Jo were known in our small high school as "sinners." To talk about them was okay because they had a reputation and neither seemed to be trying to live it down. I was uncomfortable being around either of them, so I avoided their company. Things were less complicated that way.

Luke tells the story of a similar kind of person in Luke 7:36-50. She, too, is viewed by everyone else as a "sinner." It is likely that she and Jesus had met before this incident took place. Whether in private or as part of a crowd, she likely had listened as He told of God's saving, gracious sovereignty. I picture her pondering, considering what He said. Faith leaps up within her, daring to challenge her self–imposed identity. Along with the birth of her faith, courage steps forth. She begins to make a plan.

As Luke relates it, Jesus is the guest of a religious man—a Pharisee—named Simon, but the host is quite uncomfortable. Jesus is welcome, but not too welcome. The red carpet is locked up tight in the hall closet and will not be making an appearance this night. No one will accuse Simon of being too kind and compromising. No kiss of fellowship is given. Jesus needs to know His placeand understand who is who!

The sinful woman certainly knew her place. Communities have a way of helping people understand what is acceptable and what is forbidden. Honor is given to whom honor is due. Disdain is heaped upon whom disdain is due. And most of us get in line and accept what is ladled out to us. We adjust our self–esteem to the position assigned us, and shake our heads at those who don't know the system.

Jesus knew His place also. That, to me, is one of the most interesting aspects of His personality. He was comfortable with who He was. The expectations of others didn't cause Him to lie, bluff or get angry. He didn't compromise His integrity because people might think less of Him.

As the story unfolds, Jesus tells Simon that the woman has acted in such a seemingly uncouth manner because she is in love. God wants and loves her, and she believes it. It's amazing what beliefs can do to people. They get some crazy ideas and forget who they are. They forget to stay in their place and begin to do things which are uncalled for. I believe Simon was embarrassed by this woman's bold display of love and honor as she wet the feet of Jesus with her tears, gently washed them, dried them with her own hair, and then lovingly kissed them. What a display!

He is embarrassed because he did not welcome Jesus as he should have and because this shocking scene is happening in his house. He is uncomfortable with her humility—you anoint heads, not feet! He dislikes her excessive tears and the perfume is distracting to everyone (and I wonder if he might not have been a little jealous as well). Everything has gone wrong with the evening and Jesus appears to be not the least bit concerned. He is simply watching the sinful woman, not saying a word.

Simon's list of questions for Jesus will go unasked this night. His attempt to take Jesus down a few notches has been pushed aside as the sinful woman shouts with her actions that Jesus is supreme and is worthy of great honor.

What kind of faith leads a woman like this to decide to anoint Jesus? Had she planned to cry, to wipe His feet with her hair? Did she think about where to do it and who might be watching? Most of what she did seems to be spontaneous. When she was ready, she began looking for Jesus. She rushed to Simon's house and entered without being invited. She saw none but Him who loved her. Emotions burst forth, forming tears that pour onto Jesus' feet. She brought no towel, but her hair will suffice.

No holding back, no reservations, no timidity. The sinful woman makes a fool of herself by anointing the feet instead of the head, by forgetting a towel, and by touching this man in public. Not only is she sinful; she's lost control! Poor girl. Something has pushed her over the edge.

This reaction is unusual. We do not often see such excessive devotion, even in the New Testament. So why is it here? Let's look at the conversation between Jesus and Simon.

The Pharisee thinks even less of Jesus as he watches this outrageous woman grovel at Jesus' feet. He, knowing the system, judges that Jesus is not a prophet because righteous people do not allow themselves to be handled by unrighteous people. If this seems too unfamiliar, imagine being hugged and held, in front of a crowd, by someone you consider to be aggressively immoral.

Then Jesus decides to help Simon see what he is blind to. He tells a story.

"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon is no idiot; the answer is obvious. The bigger the relief, the greater the appreciation. Perhaps we can excuse Simon somewhat due to his proximity. Maybe he was too close to the situation to be objective. How could he know the woman was a recent convert? How was he to know that she would take God so seriously? Should we expect him to guess that she was motivated by love? Is that your first thought when you see someone acting unusual?

Jesus then points out to Simon that his hospitality has been somewhat lacking. The reason, Jesus says, is that Simon has a deficient, small–minded love that reflects his relationship with God. Simon does not truly feel or understand that God forgives. He is uncomfortable with

"We do not often see such excessive devotion, even in the New Testament."

this woman because he is not at ease with the Holy One. His displeasure with Jesus indicates a lack of true knowledge of God.

Then, remarkably, Jesus pronounced her sins forgiven. Simon is not heard from again, but the other guests question and object among themselves, "Who is this man who thinks that he can forgive sins?" Simon himself appears to be speechless. The silence in the text regarding how Simon responded may be intentional. Maybe we are meant to put ourselves in his place and ask what our own reaction to Jesus would be. If we needed rebuking by the Son of God, would we accept it, repent and get in line to wash His feet? Jesus has already rescued the sinful woman, but will Simon join her? Let us enjoy and encourage the rescue operation.

The compassion of Jesus is matched by the overwhelming response of the forgiven woman and is contrasted with the self–righteousness of Simon. I was too intimidated by Brenda and Abby Jo to have been of any help to them. I also find it very difficult to talk to people the way Jesus spoke to Simon. Both situations frighten me. But I see us struggling with another feeling: skepticism.

We have seen so many Christians quit coming to church meetings and we have seen too many Christians remain uncommitted to think this life a walk in the park. We tend to wait and see if a new Christian will stick it out before we give him or her much attention. We take the position that if they will first prove themselves by attending regularly, then we can tolerate them and even offer some special assistance. We are skeptical. We are like Simon.

The forgiven woman needed a community of faith that would accept and nurture her. She would have a hard time going it alone. The Pharisees were certainly not impressed or helpful. She desperately needed some people to welcome and accept her. That is the function of the church of Jesus Christ.

Resist the temptation to judge and discount people. Don't be caught withholding your love, knowledge and skill. Rather, open your heart to the sinful and the Simon's of this world. And go in peace.

Amos Allen preaches for the Asheboro church in Asheboro, NC. Contact him at 1755 Rocky Lane, Asheboro, NC 27203.

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Compassion and Humility

PAUL MOBLEY

humility. The thought of that word can strike fear in human hearts. To think of the things that life can do to us—for instance, the loss of all our possessions so that we are made poor, or the suffering of a long and disabling health condition, are only two of the many potentially unwanted conditions that can come into our lives—is one kind of humility we fear. Then there is the kind of humility that expresses itself in a concern for other people, in contrast toour self–aggrandizing and self–important pride. That, too, frightens us.

> **“CHRISTIANS ARE THOSE WHO LOVE PEOPLE AS JESUS LOVED PEOPLE.”**

One of the most fundamental virtues of the Christian is humility; humility that looks outward to the care of others. Christians are those who love people as Jesus loved people. Christians love people as God loves all people. The apostle Paul instructed in Philippians 2:3-4, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” The greatest example of this attitude of humility was Jesus Himself.

Jesus practiced humble compassion. In Luke 7:11-14 a mother’s only son died. Verse 13 says that when Jesus saw her, He “had compassion on her.” Looking outwardly to the needs of the widow (humility), the Lord brought the woman’s son back to life. In this story, and throughout Luke, we see Jesus being a servant to other people.

The four gospels narrate many instances of the humble compassion of Jesus and of His care for others. For instance, there is the feeding of the four thousand in Matthew 15:29-37 and the restoring of sight to the two blind men in Matthew 20:30-34. In verse 34 Matthew writes, “Jesus had compassion on them…” He humbled Himself, becoming a servant (Phil. 2:7).

Jesus forcefully stressed humble compassion when He taught the disciples whosoever would be great must become a servant (Lk. 22:26-27). Imitators of Christ are to have mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5) and are to humble themselves as little children (Matt. 18:4). Jesus commanded His followers to show compassion to those in need (Matt. 25:37-40). The writer of Hebrews supports this teaching by reminding Christians, “Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering,” (Heb. 13:1-3).

Humble compassion was at the heart of the story that Jesus told in Luke 10:25-37, the parable of the "good Samaritan." In that story He tells about the responses of three men toward a stranger in need. A man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho was robbed, wounded, stripped of his clothes and left for dead by the side of the road. The priest and the Levite who walked by on the other side could not say "I didn't know," for how could anyone passing by miss a naked, bleeding man who was direly in need of care? The priest who came along was granted with an opportunity to do good, to save a fellow human being. Yet, he moved to the other side of the road and went on. Moving to the other side of the road was a confession that he saw the man and recognized the need, but did not want to get involved. And a Levite came along, taking the same course of action. Both of these men demonstrated a lack of humble compassion.

Then came along a scorned Samaritan. Seeing the robbery victim, this man went straight to him and administered aid. He saw a fellow human being suffering. There was for him no debate. He did not summon the authorities or anyone else; he took care of the need himself. Without any self–centered fear of cost or harm, the Samaritan acted humbly and compassionately toward this robbery victim. He loaded the man on his (the Samaritan's) donkey, took him to an inn, and cared for him overnight. When morning came he took some of his own money and gave it to the innkeeper, instructing him to care for the wounded man; and if the costs ran more than the money provided, to continue the care and he would pay the innkeeper upon his return.

The Samaritan experienced genuine sympathy intertwined with a strong desire to help a fellow human being. He acted on that feeling without any concern for himself. Nor did he seek anyrecognition. Self became less important in this situation. His only question seemed to be, "What can I do to help this man?" He acted with humility and compassion. The Samaritan serves as a clear example of the actions of individual Christians who have a genuine love for others in need.

Jesus certainly saw Himself as a servant and cared for people regardless of their position in man's society. Lack of rest and food never deterred Him. His humility and compassion for people kept Him serving them wherever He went.

In His compassion, however, Jesus did more than give people what they needed for their physical needs. He also gave them what they needed for their spiritual needs. He gave them forgiveness without compromising their sin. He gave them a view of God by His words and actions. He gave them the Word of God.

When we refuse to help someone—turning away a fellow human being or a fellow Christian—we may be turning away an angel (a sobering thought). We also run the risk of losing a great reward, for Jesus said that if we give it will be given back to us in abundance, pressed down, shaken together, until running over (Lk. 6:38).

The humility and compassion of Jesus serve as an example for all Christians. Let us do as He did, offering the gift of God's love and the gift of God's Word.

Paul Mobley can be contacted at Rt. 3 Box 410, Cynthiana, KY 41031.

Christ's Compassion for the Dispised

Terry Graves

"Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too [a wicked, despised man, TG], is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (read Luke 19:1-10).

The story of Zacchaeus was one of the first Bible stories we learned as children, but have we understood it as adults? What is the point of this story? It no doubt serves as an illustration of what Luke recorded earlier in 18:24-27. After the wealthy young ruler had turned away from Jesus, the Lord remarked, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven." But then He went on to observe, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."

Zacchaeus himself was a rich man for whom God had just done the impossible. He was being brought into the kingdom of God. A camel was about to pass through the eye of a needle. Even the wealthy one who rely on themselves and trust in their wealth can be saved by God's grace and brought into the kingdom of God when they repent.

Perhaps the primary point of the story is the kind of person that Jesus saved. First century Jewish society excluded Zacchaeus, but Jesus embraced him. The Jews' hatred for Jewish tax collectors is well known, but Jesus reached out to them. He had room in His heart for the outcasts, the despised, and the hated. He loved the unlovable. He felt compassion for them.

Bruce Thielemann once spoke about what he saw on the wall of a subway in New York City. An advertising poster depicted a dignified older gentleman recommending a particular product. Someone, probably a little boy, wanted to deface the advertisement, so he drew a balloon coming out of the mouth of the dignified, older gentleman. Then the youngster wrote in the balloon "I like grils." Someone else had come along and wrote under that, "It's 'girls' stupid, not 'grils.' " Then a third party had come and written under that, "But then what about us grils?"

Indeed, what about us "grils?" What about the people that no one else wants to acknowledge? What about the people that nobody seems to like? What about the people who feel they have been crowded out of the middle of life, shoved aside, pushed someplace they don't want to be? What about "grils"—folks who don't seem to fit in and are unwanted, folks who are unlovable?

Zacchaeus was a "gril." He had no place among his own people. Then Jesus came to town and Zacchaeus desperately wanted to see Him. He was a short man and as the people pressed to see the Lord, he got shoved aside. He was crowded out. This probably sums up his life very well. He had been crowded out of life.

It might have been that Zacchaeus was crowded out because of the way in which he had become a success. He worked for the Romans and thus was viewed as a traitor. At the same time, he had cheated people. He stepped on others to get to the top of the ladder. It's no wonder that he was an outsider; a fellow like that is never popular.

Why else was he crowded out? It might have been because of his sin, or his insensitivity to the people. It could have been because others were envious because of his success. Likely it was a combination of all three, especially his insensitivity to the needs of others. When Jesus reached out to Zacchaeus and went into his home, "all the people saw this and began to mutter, 'He has gone to be the guest of a sinner' " (Lk. 19:7). Earlier in Luke 15:2 the Pharisees and teachers of the law had complained, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Of course Jesus welcomed them, spent time with them, and cared for them. That is why He came! He came to seek and to save the lost.

Zacchaeus knew he was lost. He was desperate, so he climbed a tree in order to see Jesus. He was lonely. He was an outsider. He was wealthy, but he was also unhappy. Despised and hated by men, he was reaching out for the love of God. He was determined to see Jesus—the one who loved and welcomed sinners—and he would let nothing stop him. He had what William Barclay called the "courage of desperation." Do we today have that kind of desperation for our Lord Jesus? Do we long to know Him and enjoy His presence? Does our sense of need drive us relentlessly into deeper faith, trust, and dependence upon Him?

In a strange sort of way, when Zacchaeus climbed that tree he was actually getting down on his knees. He threw away his dignity and humbled himself before the Lord and the people. He humbled himself and became like a little child. And how did Jesus respond? He exalted Zacchaeus. He went to his home that day, but He also went into the heart of Zacchaeus and brought him into the kingdom of God.

In this story a seeking man became found. Zacchaeus thought he was seeking Jesus, but Jesus was seeking him first! To the man in the tree Jesus said, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." *I must.* Jesus was saying, "This is why I am passing through Jericho. I am on a search and rescue mission. I am here to save you, Zacchaeus." This encounter teaches us about the importance of the individual; even an unwanted, despised individual. Jesus was a very busy man. He was on His way to Jerusalem to die for the sins of all humanity. The world truly was upon His shoulders, but He still had time for one person. With a heart filled with compassion, Christ focused on Zacchaeus.

And Jesus knows your name. He cares about you. He knows where you hurt. He calls your name and asks you to let Him save you. Each of us is loved beyond measure and the best prof of that fact is Jesus' death on the cross for our sins.

When Jesus saved Zacchaeus, He also changed him. When Jesus went into his home Hetransformed his life. All of a sudden, this man who had been consumed by greed found himself concerned with justice, mercy, and generosity as he never had before. He found himself with Jesus.

The outsider has become an insider by the grace of God. The one who had been crowded out found a home in the family of God. The hated one experienced the love of God in Christ Jesus. He became a different man, loving God and neighbor. He became a true child of Abraham, a man of faith and trust. Why did all of this happen? Because our Lord had compassion for the despised.

Jesus is still seeking the lost and yearning to save them. Has He found you? And if He has, are you now seeking the lost and yearning to save them?

Terry Graves preaches for the Shelby Church of Christ. He may be contacted at 845 W. Warren St., Shelby, NC 2851.

Jesus, Master, Have Pity On Us: Compassion for the Suffering

WALTER EDWARDS

The earnest plea of the ten men who were suffering from leprosy, as recorded in Luke 17:11-19, provides the title and theme of this article. Jesus' loving response in healing the sick men reflected a characteristic which was clearly evident of God's Son—compassion for the suffering. Since we strive to follow His leadership and since to love our fellowman is the second most important In this article I want to address one particular group of people who often find themselves suffering and who need our compassion, understanding, and assistance—the divorced. Too often they are looked upon with suspicion and condemnation, regardless of the circumstances that led to the breakup of their marriages. Do you have any idea how traumatic divorce is? Consider this statement from *The Divorce Recovery Guide* by Greeson, Hollingsworth and Washburn, "Divorce—a fate worse than death? Some divorced people would say so; others would disagree. And yet everyone would agree on one thing: divorce is painful at best, a disaster to avoid with your greatest effort. It is a time of trauma, tragedy and tears."

In his book *Growing Through Divorce*, Jim Smoke writes, "Divorce is one of the most painful and emotionally draining experiences that a human being can have. It results in the death of a marriage but does not have the finality of physical death. The vestiges of a former way of life remain to remind and overshadow one's present existence. it is a hurt that goes deep and is accompanied by the doubt that it will ever heal." The pain and trauma of divorce should not be dismissed by those who have never experienced it.

That trauma is composed of many complex feelings that divorced people almost always experience. First there is *shock*. "This can't be happening to me." "Maybe I will wake up and find out that this is a bad dream." "I never would have dreamed of this!" Then there is usually *numbness*. "I couldn't feel anything at first. It was as though someone unplugged me and I quit being myself." Then follows *panic*. "What on earth will I do?" "How can I be both a mother and a father?" "How will I ever be able to pay the bills?" And panic soon gives way to *anger*. Many confess, "I was in a rage!" "You owe me. Doesn't all these years of marriage count for anything?" "I wanted to hit him, or throw something."

Other feelings that contribute to the trauma may be *vengeance*. "I just wanted to throw all her stuff out on the sidewalk." "There must be something I can do, some creative way to get even."

Or *depression*. "I felt a deep despair and helplessness. I thought that I would never make it through this." "I didn't want to clean house or cook or go to work or do anything." "I didn't want to see anyone or talk to anyone. I wanted to crawl into a hole somewhere." "I thought about taking my own life." Or *jealousy and resentment*. "I was jealous of the place in her heart someone else had taken." "I thought of other couples who had made their marriages work and was resentful of them and my former spouse." "I resented being tied down while he was free to come and go as he pleased." And often an overwhelming sense of *loneliness*. "There is no one to talk to when you get home." "I don't have anyone to hold me or love me." "I feel so empty."

Then there is the inevitable *sense of failure* and *guilt*. "I felt I had failed at one of the most important undertakings in life. My self– confidence was shaken and I wondered it I could ever succeed at anything really important." "I feel the break–up was somehow my fault, even though she was the one who left." "I should have tried harder." "I feel badly for our children because they won't have both parents full–time."

Perhaps now you better understand why divorced persons need compassion and understanding? What should our response to their need be? We must help them rather than avoiding them and try to understand them rather than judge them. Will we help the hurting to heal? Jesus did.

Walter Edwards preaches for the Northview Church of Christ in Statesville, NC. You can contact him at 1210 Museum Rd., Statesville, NC 28677.

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Brotherhood News

HUNTERSVILLE, NC... The Lake Norman Church of Christ began meeting at the Holiday Inn in Cornelius, NC, in April of 1994 with three members. Beginning January 1, 1995, the church rented a converted restaurant in Huntersville, having grown to twelve members. Huntersville is a fast growing community and the congregation now has 34 members with 35–40 in attendance every Sunday. Brannon McKnight is currently doing the preaching on a part–time basis while holding a secular job in Statesville. The congregation is presently looking for a full–time preacher and a place to build as soon as it is feasible. The Northview church in Statesville is supporting the Huntersville church financially. The church is in immediate need of pews. If anyone has knowledge of pews for sale or has some they would be willing to donate, please contact Howard Rorrer at (704) 875-2200 or at P.O. Box 2392, Huntersville, NC 28070.

ORANGEBURG, SC... The Orangeburg Church of Christ is searching for an evangelist for their work in the Orangeburg area. The county population is 85,000 and the Orangeburg area population is 45,000. With a membership of 70, there is excellent potential for growth. The church believes that it offers internal harmony and unity, a self-supporting status, and a track record in helping to plant other congregations as marks of strength for a successful evangelistic work. The are looking for an evangelist with strong preaching skills, biblical soundness and a caring spirit with a commitment to home Bible studies and other evangelistic efforts. Those interested should call the church office at (803) 534-7926; or send a letter, resume and sermon tape to the elders at P.O. Box 882, Orangeburg, SC 29116.

LUBBOCK, TX... On July 29, 1996, the Sunset International Bible Institute enrolled its 67th class of men and women training to take the gospel to the whole world. This class represents the beginning of the 35th year of ministry training at Sunset. Included in this class of 32 are five foreign students representing the nations of China, Indonesia, Mexico, Russiaand Canada. There are also three deaf students in this class. Three more of the students are children of Sunset alumni. With its extension department, tapes and course guides of the actual classes (for use in individual study, Bible class or other group studies), Sunset is reaching more and more people every year. Inquiries about the school should be addressed to Truitt Adair at Sunset International Bible Institute, 34th St., Lubbock, TX 79410. You may also call (806) 792-5191, or visit the school's homepage at http://sunbird.sat.net/~sunset.

Bridgeport National
Bindery, Inc.
MAY 2000